

Hon. G. B. WOOD: If these men were not allowed to sit on the bench I believe the Government would appoint others. In the country there are men ready to be appointed.

Hon. G. FRASER: I hope that the Committee will reject the amendment. I am sorry the Bill does not go the whole hog and make 70 the age at which a J.P. would lose his commission. Because these old people still retain their commission, other people are prevented from being appointed.

Hon. G. B. Wood: That will not stop them.

Hon. G. FRASER: That has happened in my district. If these people still want to sign documents they could be made commissioners for declarations. Mr. Tuckey said that the police asked these old men to sit on the bench because they were the handiest to get hold of.

Hon. W. J. Mann: I thought you said you could not get them to do the job.

Hon. G. FRASER: In the country areas that Mr. Tuckey is speaking of the old men evidently are doing the job.

Hon. H. Tuckey: There is the greatest difficulty in getting men to sit on the bench.

Hon. G. FRASER: They can get hold of the old men of 70 years of age who do not wander too far.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	8
Noes	16
Majority against	8

AYES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. V. Hamersley
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch	Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. F. E. Gibson	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. H. Tuckey
	(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. C. R. Cornish	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. A. L. Loton
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt.	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. E. H. H. Hall.	Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. E. M. Heenan	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. W. R. Hall
	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

House adjourned at 10.2 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 27th November, 1945.

	PAGE
Questions: Licensed premises, as to annual inspections	2200
Ministers of the Crown, as to number and hours worked	2201
Wheat for stock, as to transport by road vehicles	2201
Great Southern trains, as to prevention of overcrowding	2201
Juvenile delinquents, as to detention accommodation	2201
Potato dehydration, as to closing of Donnybrook works	2202
Government business, precedence	2202
Bills: Criminal Code Amendment, 2R.	2202
Building Operations and Building Materials Control, report	2202
Standing Orders suspension	2202
2R.	2202
Financial Emergency Act Amendment, 2R.	2202
Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act Continuance, 2R.	2203
Public Works Act Amendment, 2R., Com., report	2203
Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act Amendment, returned	2205
Industrial Development (Resumption of Land), 2R., Com.	2206
Message	2244
Public Service Appeal Board Act Amendment, 2R., Com., report	2207
Land Act Amendment, 2R.	2208
War Service Land Settlement Agreement, 2R., Com.	2209
Supreme Court Act Amendment (No 2), Council's request for Conference	2244

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

QUESTIONS.

LICENSED PREMISES.

As to Annual Inspections.

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister representing the Minister for Police:

1, Is it customary for local secretaries of road boards to accompany police constables in all or any country districts during the annual inspection of licensed premises generally and hotels in particular?

2, Have any instructions been given by the Commissioner of Police that the foregoing procedure should be adopted?

3, If this practice has been followed, will he indicate in what areas and for what reasons?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied :

(1) No

(2) No.

(3) The Chief Inspector of Licensed Premises has instructed generally that where considered necessary or advisable the local health inspector could be invited to accom-

pany a police officer when making annual inspections of licensed premises to advise on sanitation and drainage matters.

MINISTERS OF THE CROWN.

As to Number and Hours Worked.

Mr. NORTH asked the Premier:

1, How many Ministers are necessary to carry out State policy assuming that the hours devoted to the work conform to maximum efficiency and freedom from nervous breakdown?

2, What is the answer to (1) if the North-West is excluded?

3, What is the average working day of a Minister under present conditions (a) when Parliament is in session, (b) during recess?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) and (2) Part 11 of the Constitution Acts Amendment Act of 1899 provides for the maximum number of principal executive offices, namely eight.

(3) In both cases a Minister is rarely in a position to say he is "off duty" and long hours are unavoidable.

WHEAT FOR STOCK.

As to Transport by Road Vehicles.

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Railways:

1, In view of the urgency of making supplies of wheat available to stockowners, particularly in the South-West, and in view of the inability of the Railway Department to transport it, will he arrange for the wheat to be transported by road vehicles in preference to using such vehicles for transporting wheat for export?

2, If so, will he also see that stockowners are not charged more than rail freights on such wheat?

The MINISTER replied:

1, Owing to coal shortages some delay has occurred in meeting orders for wheat for stock food, but the department will be up to date with all old orders at the end of the current week and no difficulty is anticipated in meeting orders from all points. In the circumstances there is no necessity to arrange cartage of wheat to stockowners in the South-West by road.

2, Answered by No. 1.

GREAT SOUTHERN TRAINS.

As to Prevention of Overcrowding.

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Railways:

1, In view of the fact that Diesel rail cars on the Great Southern line are being overloaded, thus preventing all passengers from obtaining a seat, will he endeavour to have steam trains in place of the Diesel, at events on those days on which such cars run through to Albany?

2, If not, why not?

The MINISTER replied:

1, Diesel-electric rail cars meet requirements on the Great Southern line, except during certain holiday and school vacation periods, when steam trains are substituted. A steam train permanently in lieu of Diesel electric on the Perth-Albany run would be uneconomical and slow up the service.

2, Answered by No. 1.

JUVENILE DELINQUENTS.

As to Detention Accommodation.

Mr. NEEDHAM asked the Minister for Social Services:

1, Is he aware of the undesirable practice of delinquent children being detained in custody in close proximity to or included among adult offenders?

2, That the morals of delinquent children thus detained are endangered by their proximity to older and hardened offenders?

3, That the Special Magistrate in the Children's Court has frequently complained of the lack of suitable accommodation for delinquent children?

4, Will he take immediate steps to provide accommodation for this class of juvenile offender so as to avoid undesirable contact?

The MINISTER replied:

1, Delinquent children are housed in special lock-up separate from the Police gaol. They do not come into close proximity with and are never included among adult offenders.

2, Answered by No. 1.

3, This question has no relationship with the housing of delinquent children in lock-ups.

4, Provision for a remand home has been made under the heading of "Post-war Reconstruction" and this building should be one of the first to be erected. This will be away with the present lock-up.

POTATO DEHYDRATION.

As to Closing of Donnybrook Works.

Mr. HOLMAN (without notice) asked the Minister for Agriculture: Concerning a deputation which I recently arranged with the Minister, and Mr. Lemmon, M.H.R., and at which members of the Preston Road Board, Mr. Farrell and others were present, in regard to the availability of dehydrated potato contracts from the Commonwealth for the purpose of keeping open the dehydration works at Donnybrook—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must ask a question, not make a speech.

Mr. HOLMAN: Will the Minister endeavour to expedite a reply from the Commonwealth so that this plant shall not be shut down, with resulting unemployment of members of the staff?

The MINISTER replied: The urgency of this matter is fully realised. This week I despatched a telegram to the Federal Minister for Commerce asking him to let me have a reply as soon as possible.

**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS,
PRECEDENCE.**

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Jaseoyne) [4.37]: I move—

That for the remainder of the session Government business shall take precedence of all motions and Orders of the Day on Wednesdays as on all other days.

This motion follows one which I moved a month ago, to the effect that on alternate Wednesdays Government business take precedence. I bring forward this motion, however, with a notice paper free of private members' business; but on the distinct understanding that the Government will give consideration to any matters brought forward by private members before the close of the session.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [4.38]: I do not propose to offer any opposition to the notion; because, as the Premier observes, for once in a way there is no private members' business on the notice paper. The concluding words of the Premier's remarks have removed from me the necessity of asking the only question I had in mind. His assurance is quite satisfactory to me.

Question put and passed.

BILL—CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

**BILL—BUILDING OPERATIONS AND
BUILDING MATERIALS CONTROL.**

Report of Committee adopted.

Standing Orders Suspension.

On motion by the Premier, so much of the Standing Orders suspended as to allow of the third reading to be passed at the present sitting.

On motion by the Premier, the third reading made an Order of the Day for a later stage of the sitting.

**BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY ACT
AMENDMENT.***Second Reading.*

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. A. H. Panton—Leederville) [4.40] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is an old friend of the House. Many of us have unhappy recollections of the necessity for this measure. The Act was originally passed in 1934 when it provided for deductions from salaries, wages, etc. I suppose we are all very pleased that the need for those deductions has come to an end. The Act was amended in 1934 and again in 1935. The only portion of the original Act remaining is that which provides for the control of interest in certain cases. Interest rates on mortgages in existence prior to the 31st December, 1931, were reduced to 5 per cent., or by 22½ per cent. of the original rate, whichever was the greater. The Government feels that as the present money rates are much lower than 5 per cent., or even the 22½ per cent., by which it was reduced at that time, mortgagors suffer little or no hardship. We think the time has arrived when this provision could well be withdrawn.

We have discussed on more than one occasion the question whether the time was opportune to allow the Financial Emergency Act to lapse but it was felt that certain mortgagors might be put into a difficult position if that were done. The Act has, therefore, been kept on the statute book. But now there are very few of these mortgages in opera-

tion; most of those covered by the Act have expired. The Government thought it advisable to give a certain amount of notice rather than let the measure die at the end of December, which is the usual time. We have, therefore, decided that it shall continue until the 30th September, 1946, and no longer. That should give the mortgagors an opportunity to obtain fresh accommodation at the lower rates now operating. In effect we propose to continue the Financial Emergency Act, which first came into operation in 1934 and has been continued in various ways since, until the 30th September next and no longer. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Watts, debate adjourned.

BILL—MORTGAGEES' RIGHTS RESTRICTION ACT CONTINUANCE.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. A. H. Panton—Leederville) [4.45] in moving the second reading said: This is another old friend. As a matter of fact this measure goes further back than the Financial Emergency Act. It was originally passed in 1931 and has been continued from year to year since. This measure applies only to mortgages that were in existence prior to the 19th August, 1931, and to mortgages given after that date in substitution for those in force at that time, and actually this legislation has only affected those mortgages. The Act was designed to protect mortgagors against foreclosure without the mortgagee applying to the court, and it lays down circumstances for the guidance of the court in hearing those applications. The Court only grants leave to proceed in cases where no hardship to the mortgagor would result. The number of applications to the court has been steadily declining. In 1939 there were 106 applications, in 1943 there were 29 and in 1944 there were only 24.

In order to avoid hardship to small mortgagees whose sole income is dependent upon their investment, the Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act Amendment Act was passed last year, and that Act applied only to mortgagees whose net incomes did not exceed £5 per week, and with a total estate not exceeding £2,500. We cleaned up the position in regard to the small mortgagees last year. Furthermore, the mortgage in question must

not exceed £1,000. An alteration was also made to the effect that such mortgagees were allowed to approach the Commissioner of Titles instead of the court, so simplifying the application and also, we hoped, reducing the costs. To date, it is interesting to note no application has been made under the amendment. That means that either there is no hardship existing, or that the existence of the Act has tempered the outlook of mortgagors. If the Act were allowed to lapse at the end of this year it might not give mortgagors sufficient time to transfer the mortgages in cases where the mortgagee will not write down the interest rate voluntarily.

The Government is of the opinion that the end of the war will bring more money for investment and that mortgagors will have little difficulty in obtaining the necessary accommodation. The Government also considers, as in the case of the Financial Emergency Act, that the time has arrived when we should give a few months' notice of the termination of this legislation. So it is proposed that at the end of September, 1945, and no later, this Act shall also go out of operation. Most members will agree that this legislation—particularly these two measures—has been carried on from year to year as an annual Bill and that there is very little necessity for it now. We propose that at the end of September, 1946, it will cease. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. North, debate adjourned.

BILL—PUBLIC WORKS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 22nd November.

MR. DONEY (Williams-Narrogin) [4.50]: This is a two-pronged Bill aiming firstly to make the Minister for Works for the time being a body corporate with perpetual succession and a common seal and secondly, to so amend the definitions of "Public Work" and "Work" as to enable the Minister to enter upon land and compulsorily take therefrom such building material as the land may hold and use the material for the construction of Government sponsored buildings or industries. I see little reason to object to these amendments but I consider, particularly with respect to the second point, that some explanation

might be given by the Minister. One might be pardoned for feeling a little dubious as to the essentiality of making the Minister a body corporate, seeing that over the past half century and, indeed, for a much longer period than that, successive Ministers have not regarded this as a matter of any consequence at all. Obviously, all work of the Public Works Department over the lengthy period I have referred to, has been performed and all the requirements met without the aid of the legal instrument in question. As the Minister could have become a body corporate without any difficulty at all, it seems to me fair to assume that such power was not necessary in the past and quite likely is not necessary now.

There is, of course, the point that an unusual situation may have arisen during the last few weeks or months, a situation not previously encountered; and this matter of corporation may in consequence have become urgent. The Minister may therefore wish to make an explanation on that point. He made out no case for the Minister being made a body corporate but he did say that over the years there has been considerable trouble, difficulty or embarrassment which resulted because the Minister was not a body corporate. Naturally, the assumption is that such embarrassment and difficulty must have been small indeed if no Minister over the years took any action whatever to correct the position. The Minister did say that the Minister for Lands and the Minister for Education are bodies corporate, but we can hardly accept that fact as an argument favouring similar treatment for a Minister who handles an entirely different type of responsibilities. Although I am not denying the possibility, nevertheless he made out no case to indicate that such a course was equally requisite, having regard to new conditions that now obtain. I therefore ask the Minister to amplify his case in the direction I have indicated. If he does, I have no doubt it will be possible for members on the Opposition side of the House to accept the amendment.

The other proposal included in the Bill seeks the enlargement of the definitions of "Public Work" and "Work", and that seems satisfactory enough. Power is sought to recover from private lands all building materials necessary for the carrying on of industrial undertakings to be conducted by the Government under statute in

the same way as building material is now taken from private land for the construction of railways and other public works. As there are included in respect of the new requirements precisely the same provision for compensation as exists already in respect of damage done and materials taken under the other Act, the proposals appear to me to be fair. I do not know whether the learned members sitting on my left and right see anything in that provision to which to take exception but, on the assumption that they have studied the Bill from that aspect, I assume they will take part in the debate if they consider it necessary to do so.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Rodoreda in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 5: Minister to be body corporate.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have taken it for granted that the question raised by the member for Williams-Narrogin in connection with this clause was not with the object of opposing the proposal to make the Minister for Works a body corporate.

Mr. Doney: No, I took it that the amendment was due to conditions of which we have no knowledge.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: There are not many new developments with regard to this action being taken; but I think it should have been taken years ago, and it is certainly very desirable now. The Act has been amended on very few occasions, and I suppose the reason why this particular amendment was not placed before members previously was that so very few attempts have been made to amend the Act in any particular. The Minister for Works today, and for many years past, in carrying out certain duties has to some extent taken upon his individual shoulders responsibilities which no Minister of the Crown for the time being should be called upon to carry, because they could still be attached to him legally after he had lost his position as Minister no matter what the reason for his vacating office might have been. I think there can be no objection to the clause, and

there are good reasons why the Committee should accept it.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—INCREASE OF RENT (WAR RESTRICTIONS) ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council with an amendment.

BILL—INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (RESUMPTION OF LAND).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 22nd November.

MR. ABBOTT (North Perth) [5.1]: The purpose of the Bill is to empower the Government to acquire land compulsorily when it considers that it will be in the interests of the State so to do. Two systems are provided in the Bill whereby this may be done. The first is where the application for resumption is initiated at the behest of a private individual, who claims that it would be in the interests of industrial development and of the State that he should be enabled to establish and carry on a business, and that it is essential that such land should be acquired for him for the purpose. The second system is where the Government, on its own initiative, seeks to acquire land for industrial purposes when considered to be in the interests of the State so to do. So we have two complete systems, and the provisions for them differ.

Parliament has long accepted the principle that, where necessary for public works, the State should have authority compulsorily to resume land. That principle has been established for a considerable time. Lately Parliament gave the Government power to resume land when this was considered to be necessary in furtherance of the agricultural development of the State, and it could be acquired for the use, not only of the Government itself, but also of private citizens. Now we come to the point where the Government is seeking power to resume land for the use of private individuals for purposes connected with their business when it is considered that in the interests of the industrial development of the State such land should be so ac-

quired and so re-allocated. Although the Bill enunciates the principle that is contrary to the long-established principle of British law that a title in fee simple gives the owner the right of holding the land against all comers, I am prepared to agree to the second reading having in view the developmental trend of the legislation in this question.

Perhaps the Minister will say that I am gradually being converted to his policy, but I claim that the policy of my party places the welfare and progress of the people at all times and in all things above other concerns.

The Minister for Works: This is a non-party Bill, surely!

MR. ABBOTT: I have some right to feel that the Minister has seen the force of the views I have advanced in the House during this session in claiming that it was the duty of a Minister of the Crown to disclaim publicly acts that were done in disregard of the law. I was glad to hear the Minister say that that stand has been taken, and I must commend the Minister on his latest regard for the law in its application to Colliie industrial circles. I am pleased to have had the opportunity to pass these few remarks, though they may not be directly associated with the Bill.

Although I am prepared to vote for the second reading of the Bill, I am not at all enamoured of its form. I propose to state a few of my general objections and, in the Committee stage, shall deal with them in greater detail. The term "industry" not defined in the Bill and, as it stands, wide enough to empower the Government to resume land for any business, whether primary or otherwise. Therefore I suggest that the term "industry" should be defined in order to make it quite clear that the Bill deals with industrial development—the development of manufactures for the production of goods and articles.

Under the first system, when the resumption is proposed at the instigation of a private individual, the Minister may resume the land after the proposal has been referred to a committee for the purpose of having the application recommended or disallowed. Should the committee propose to recommend it to the Minister, it must give notice to the registered proprietor of the land, to the local authority in whose district the land is situated and to the

Town Planning Board, but there is no provision for notice to be given to any other person interested in the land. For instance, there is no provision that a lessee shall receive notice. This is an omission that should be remedied.

Any registered proprietor may appeal to the local court with a view to having the recommendation of the committee reconsidered, and if the court holds that the committee should not give approval, the decision of the court shall be final. But no such right of appeal is proposed for the local authority or the Town Planning Board. Certainly they have the right, upon receiving notice, to submit to the committee any objection to the resumption of the land and the reason for it, and the committee, in giving its decision, must take such objection into consideration, but there is no right of appeal to any independent body by a local authority or the Town Planning Board. That is objectionable. A local authority should have the same right of appeal as is proposed for a private individual. A local authority would be vitally interested in the establishment of a secondary industry within its district; such establishment might be absolutely contrary to the adopted policy of the local authority or of the Town Planning Board.

If the committee finally gives a decision in favour of the resumption, the application will still have a long and tortuous path to follow, because it will then go before the Minister for his consideration and he in turn must submit it to the Treasurer; and the application is not to be approved if the Treasurer does not approve. If the Treasurer approves, it has to be submitted to the Governor, who may or may not approve of the resumption, in his discretion. So there is a long and tortuous path, which seems only to make for administrative work and delay. I should have thought that the ordinary procedure of direct reference to the Governor, which after all is a reference to Cabinet, would be sufficient. After resumption, the Government may offer and sell the land to the applicant, or it may offer him a lease. The offer of sale may be on terms or for cash, but the offer of a lease can only be made on condition that the whole of the expenses that the Government has incurred in connection with the resumption are reimbursed during the term of the lease.

So it is not an ordinary lease, but a lease more in the order of a hire purchase agreement. It may be provided that the agreement for a lease shall contain an option of purchase. I see no necessity for this; because if there is power to sell on terms, surely that would be a clear enough system without bringing in this additional leasing principle which, in actuality, is no lease. It might have been advisable to have power to lease the land, in the ordinary sense of the word, but that has not been provided for.

As to the second system, to which I have more objections than I have to the first, the Government has power on its own initiative, with the approval of the committee and the Minister, to resume any land it considers essential for industrial purposes. In this case, no one has a right to appeal—neither the landowner, nor the local authority, nor the Town Planning Board, and no one is required to be consulted. So the second system seems to be in direct conflict with the first. It is quite open to the Government to use either method. In the second system, after resumption the land must be dedicated, for industrial purposes, before being sold to any person. But there is no reason that I can see to prevent the Government from using the second system in every case; and therefore the owner of the land would have no right of appeal, the local authority would have no right to object, and the Town Planning Board would not be consulted.

I think the same principle should apply with reference to a right of appeal in the second system, where the Government acquires land on its own initiative, as in the first system. I see no necessity for the distinction. It is dangerous that the Government has power to resume the land of any private owner compulsorily and, after resumption, allot it to someone else without a right of appeal; and it can clearly do that if it cares to use the second system. The Government can also dedicate any land belonging to the Crown for the purposes for which it may be recognised; so it could dedicate any Class A reserve for industrial purposes, or any land that had previously been used for parks. That land could be re-dedicated for industrial purposes.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: Without an Act of Parliament?

Mr. ABBOTT: Yes. This is an Act of Parliament.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: It could not override the other one.

Mr. ABBOTT: I do not know. This is a later Bill. However, the Minister may have some comment to make on that when he replies. It can be seen that I am not enamoured of this Bill. But its principle must be given consideration, and therefore I shall agree to the second reading, subject to the reservations I have made.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Rodoreda in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Interpretation:

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for North Perth has handed to me in typewritten form several amendments he proposes to move to some of the remaining clauses in the Bill. He has not had an opportunity to place them on the notice paper; and, as it is desirable that should be done before they are discussed by the Committee, I propose that progress be reported.

Progress reported.

BILL—BUILDING OPERATIONS AND BUILDING MATERIALS CONTROL.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—PUBLIC SERVICE APPEAL BOARD ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 22nd November.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands) [5.25]: This is a Bill which is designed to rectify an error in an Act of Parliament which was passed in November, 1941. The purport of that Act was to amend subsection (3) of Section 6 of the Public Service Appeal Board Act, 1920. The circumstances under which it is stated that this Bill is necessary—or if not necessary, expedient, as I shall point out—are as follows:—In November, 1941, any person who was occupying a position of a temporary character in the Public Service and who had so occupied that position for five years or more, was entitled to apply to the Public Service Commissioner to be placed on the permanent staff; and,

if the Commissioner did not agree to his application, that person had the right of appeal to the Public Service Appeal Board for the purpose of having that decision reconsidered.

What was intended by the Act of 1941 was to provide that in respect of the period of time between November, 1941, when the Act was passed, and the period—at that time unknown and still unknown—represented by one year after the Governor-General of Australia declared the war then being conducted had ended, a portion of that intervening period should count for the purpose of that five-year period, which I have just explained to the House gave the right to a person in the Public Service only occupying a temporary position to apply for a permanent position. It may be that the Act passed in 1941 did not effect that purpose. On the whole, I feel inclined to think it did. Still, the language used was for some reason—some stupid reason—of a character so doubtful that it might merely mean that a public servant who occupied a temporary position should only be prevented from making his claim during that period between the 25th November, 1941, and the date being one year after the Governor-General had declared the war with Germany—as it then was—had ended. So, because of that doubt this Bill has been introduced.

That was the whole legal position involved. It simply means that the Bill passed in November, 1941, might be open to those two constructions; and the second of those two constructions would, of course, invalidate the measure. As to its merits, there is very little indeed to be said. Since the Bill was submitted here in the second reading speech made by the Minister, I have taken the trouble to consult the Civil Service Association. It is absolutely accurate that before November, 1941, the Public Service Commissioner did consult with the Civil Service Association for the purpose of providing for public servants who were volunteering in large numbers to join the Armed Forces to be safe in their billets if they were fortunate to come back from the war.

It was agreed between the Public Service Commissioner and the Association to suspend the whole period from the 25th November, 1941, to the date I have explained

—one year after the Governor-General had declared the war ended—from being used either in part or in whole for the qualifying period of five years. It is therefore clear that the Act of 1941 was only drawn in the present manner through inadvertence, and not because there was not a distinct understanding of what it was desired to provide for. Any other possibility would be unthinkable. We could not imagine that permanent public servants who volunteered for war service, and whose services were accepted by the Military Authorities, would be left in the position that when they returned other persons, occupying their positions in a temporary capacity, would be able to hold those positions and deprive them of their former offices. We must, therefore, agree to pass this measure to prevent that unthinkable position arising. Those who came forward and assisted the Government, both before 1941 and since that time, as temporary officers, deserve every consideration.

The Minister for Lands: They are getting it.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I think they should receive it.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: A lot of them are married women.

Hon. N. KEENAN: If, instead of joining the Public Service, they had gone to war industry, they could have earned far more money—possibly twice as much or more—than they earned as public servants and they, therefore, did the State a great amount of service. The reason why I asked the Minister to give the House an assurance is that when all those temporary officers are displaced, as they undoubtedly will be in many cases, they should be allowed long service leave commensurate with the number of years served, just as if they had been in permanent positions in the Public Service. In other words, they should receive any benefit that a person holding a permanent position in the Public Service would have derived from that number of years service. It is not asking very much, and I think it is only just. As I have said, a great number of these people could have earned much more in other avenues of employment, particularly in war industries.

At the beginning of my remarks I said this Bill was not necessary but only expedient, but on giving the matter thought I now ask the Minister whether he has arrived at the same conclusion; supposing a court of

law did hold that the proper construction of the Act of 1941 only went so far as to blot out the right to make a claim during the period covered, and supposing after that a temporary officer succeeded in getting himself placed in a permanent position in the Public Service, the Public Service Commissioner could next day declare him to be an excess officer, and out he would go! So it would appear that in the long run the Public Service Commissioner has the winning card, which he can produce at any time. I agree that it is more decent to bring the measure forward in this way. What I have suggested could happen within the law; but it is better that we should do this in the form proposed by the Minister, so I support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. A. H. Panton—Leederville) [5.37] in moving the second reading, said: The purpose of this Bill is to amend Section 121 of the Land Act by striking out the words "provided that any such land must be situated within 20 miles of a railway, or of the intended route of a proposed railway, the construction of which is authorised by Parliament." Those words at the moment prevent the purchase by the Government of any land more than 20 miles from a railway line. That provision was inserted in 1896, in the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act, which was repealed by the Land Act of 1933, but this section still remains in the Land Act. I think members will agree that in 1896, which was a horse-and-cart age—I believe that bullocks and waggons had not long gone out—there was probably good argument for restricting the purchase of land for settlement to within 20 miles of a railway line. However, with modern roads and faster transport 20 miles is not a great distance, and that provision is now a foolish one, though it may have been essential in 1896.

Hon. N. Keenan: What mileage do you now suggest?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We do not suggest any mileage, but propose to delete the words I have mentioned from Section 121 of the principal Act. Under present circumstances we want to purchase the best available land for soldier settlement, and as long as this provision remains we are restricted to areas within 20 miles of railway lines. I do not think the Land Purchase Board or the Classification Board would consider areas where it would not be economical to grow wheat.

Mr. Doney: You must be considering the possibility of going beyond the 20-mile limit to buy land.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is the possibility of wanting to buy land 21 miles or 22 miles from a railway, but under this provision we could not do so. The member for Williams-Narrogin will agree that in these days 20 miles is a very small item.

Mr. Seward: The cost of haulage to the railway would still be great.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The cost of haulage nowadays, with modern transport, is different from the cost in the days of the horse-team and waggon.

Mr. Doney: Has an instance occurred where the 20 miles restriction has proved a bar to the intention to buy land?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We are likely to strike it at any time.

Mr. Doney: You have not struck it yet?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not know that we have.

Mr. Mann: I take it the idea of this amendment is to give you freedom to purchase any good land?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so, though I agree it must be left to the board to decide. Land could be resumed for any purpose, but at present I am only considering land for soldier settlement. We are being offered estates and other lands, which may be suitable in every other way, but which happen to be outside the 20-mile radius, and under this provision we have to let it go. I do not think we should be restricted in this way. It may be argued that the railways will always carry the wheat, but in my opinion the transport of the future will probably be by motor lorries, feeding the railways, to a large extent.

In those circumstances the valuers and staff are hampered by this restriction and good land may have to be refused because of the limitation at present to be found in Section 121 of the Land Act. It is obvious that more freedom is necessary, and I do not think any limitation is required with present-day methods of transport. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Thorn, debate adjourned.

BILL—WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 20th November.

MR. THORN (Toodyay) [5.43]: I regret that I was absent from the Chamber when the Minister made his speech introducing this Bill.

The Minister for Lands: I think he made a good speech.

Mr. THORN: During the week-end I made a study of it, reading it over to make sure that I understood it. In reading that speech I found that the Minister has gone fully into the land settlement of the past and the experiences of soldiers of the last war when settled on the land. I gather, from that speech, that the present scheme is to be an almost perfect one. I hope that is so.

The Minister for Lands: So do I.

Mr. THORN: I assure the Minister will be only too pleased to congratulate the Government, when the scheme comes into operation, if it turns out to be as good as he has suggested it will be. We have learned or should have learned tremendous lot from our last soldier settlement scheme. Many schemes have been put up on paper in the last year or two regarding the rehabilitation of our ex-servicemen from the last war. I am afraid some of them are breaking down very badly. I have confidence that our soldier settlement scheme, in this State, is under the right management and under the right set-up, and will be successful in establishing our soldiers on the land on this occasion in a manner that will give them every opportunity to succeed and become prosperous settlers. I say in all sincerity that I believe we will make a good job of this scheme. I am sure the Government

will have the full co-operation of this Parliament. I feel certain I am speaking for every member on this side of the House when I say that we are prepared to co-operate with the Government and help in every way possible to make a success of the scheme, and to render what assistance we can to that end.

The Minister for Lands: That is the only way in which the scheme is likely to prove successful.

Mr. THORN: I feel that too. When dealing with the last scheme the Minister indicated a number of the weak points. My feeling is, after an examination of our last soldier settlement scheme and a full investigation, that it was not such a great failure as people would have us believe. Undoubtedly many soldiers suffered under difficulties, such as those associated with land rents and the policy of whatever Government was in power at the time. I should like to quote the case of a man who recently came under my notice. He took up 15½ acres of land in my district for the purpose of viticulture. The block was cleared, and no more. He has received a statement of his account from the Lands Department which shows that the total amount he has paid on the 15½ acres is £834 3s. 9d. The principal amounts to £295 17s. 6d., and the interest comes to £538 6s. 3d.

Mr. Cross: How many years ago did he take up the land?

Mr. THORN: I could not say for certain. The land was set out on the plan first of all at £35 an acre but was subsequently reduced to £30. This man's present account is for £198 9s. 1d. plus £4 19s. 3d. interest and Crown grant £1 10s. That is the balance he has to find. He has never failed to meet his obligations.

Mr. Cross: He would have paid that much in the rent of a house.

Mr. Mann: The whole policy is wrong.

Mr. THORN: He did not have a house. That is an instance of the drawbacks we find in connection with our past settlement schemes.

The Minister for Lands: They had a lot around their necks when they started.

Mr. THORN: That is so. They had no opportunity to succeed. Although the industry with which I am connected is getting along well and a number of soldier settlers are in it, I point out that we

would not be on our blocks today but for the revaluations and the sympathetic treatment we received as a result of those revaluations, which gave us all the opportunity to succeed.

Mr. Cross: There are too many "Nico-viches" in your part of the Swan area.

Mr. THORN: That has nothing to do with the hon. member. A good many hearts were broken in connection with our last settlement scheme. We feel confident that that will not happen again. The same thing applied in the case of group settlement. If such a scheme as the present one had been in operation those embarking in the group settlement scheme would have had a chance of success. I claim that in any scheme our best chance of achieving success is to prepare the properties for the settlers beforehand so as to give them a good start off. To send a man on the land with little experience, as has been done in the past, and with no preparation, is heart-breaking.

The Minister for Lands: With a blunt axe and no wedges.

Mr. THORN: I am pleased to see that the classification board is arranging to interview the wives of the would-be settlers to find out where they stand in the picture.

Mr. J. Hegney: That is a most important part of the set-up.

Mr. THORN: So much depends upon the attitude and make-up of the partner of the man who goes on the land. What could be worse than to take a woman on to a block and find that she is discontented from the start? That constitutes a tremendous handicap to the man on the land. I hope the classification board will adhere closely to that scheme so that both the settler and his partner in life, his wife, may be found to be quite satisfactory. I am pleased to note that the purchase and valuation of properties are well in hand and that that work is proceeding satisfactorily. It is most important that the properties should be taken over at the right valuation. We do not want any more purchases of land at high prices, so high that its productivity fails to liquidate the debt upon it. We should go carefully into the productive value and the productive capacity of all the holdings the Government proposes to take over, and make quite certain they are satisfactory in that regard.

Soldier representation on the various boards and committees was referred to by the Minister. The R.S.L. has been privileged to submit names of representatives on both boards, and also advice in regard to the set-up of the boards. Including the director himself there are many returned soldiers who are on the boards.

The Minister for Lands: Even the Minister himself.

Mr. THORN: I do not think we have any complaint in that regard. The soldier's point of view is well represented. The director has appealed to local authorities to render assistance and give advice and to play their part in furtherance of the scheme. Some members may not be quite satisfied with the set-up of road boards. Here is something that actually happened in Toodyay! The Toodyay Road Board was asked to help as to the suitability of certain farmers from the aspect of trainees. The road board itself appointed two of its soldier members and asked them to act on its behalf and assist in that direction.

The Minister for Lands: It is obvious that any board would do the same.

Mr. THORN: I am deeply interested in soldier settlement, notwithstanding which I claim that other men who did not serve either in the last war or the previous one are likely to be just as interested in this scheme and to do all they can and pull their weight to help in making it a success. I am sure that soldiers will get full representation on all these committees and boards. I hope the Commonwealth Government will carry out the promise it made to returned men, particularly concerning land settlement. If it does carry out its promise it will enable the State Government and State departments to render a lot of assistance in the way of settlement on the land, even to men who will not come under this particular scheme. If the Government will provide £1,000 rehabilitation money to experienced men and give them an opportunity to select their own holdings, after proper examination and valuation, I am sure that other instrumentalities in the State will come in behind them and assist them.

Another sound idea in our present land settlement scheme is that the losses are all going to be made before the men are settled on their blocks, so that they will start with a wonderful opportunity to succeed. I do

not want to raise any points that are likely to upset or delay the scheme from being put into operation as soon as possible. I am, however, an individualist so far as land settlement is concerned. I have certain ideas on the subject from which I can never be moved, namely, that I believe in the individuality of the man coming first. I believe in freehold. I may be moving an amendment to the Bill in Committee to provide that the settler shall have the opportunity to purchase his leasehold block after, say, five or seven years.

Mr. Mann: Does not the New South Wales Government provide for that?

The Minister for Lands: It is not participating in this scheme.

Mr. THORN: I should like some provision made in the Bill giving the soldier settler an opportunity to purchase his block. I am not tied down to any definite period. It is something we should do. If a man is happy and makes a success of his operations, and after so many years has proved himself on the block, he should have the opportunity to convert it into freehold. Another matter mentioned by the Minister was that the rent of the block will be appraised after due consideration has been given to its productive value after so many years. That is the right and proper way in which to arrive at the rental of a block of land. It should be assessed on its productive value, and when that is ascertained it will be the rent of the property for all time. Before we understood the scheme it was thought that the value of the property would be reappraised at different periods, and we therefore presumed that the rent itself would be reappraised at the same time. The Minister also said that the more he listened to the director the more he became converted to the principle of leasehold.

The Minister for Lands: I said "Those who were listening to him." I have always been a leaseholder.

Mr. THORN: Yes. It will take the director a long time to convert me entirely to the leasehold scheme. I point out that whilst he is working on that policy he is only carrying out the terms laid down in the rehabilitation legislation.

The Minister for Lands: I believe he has converted himself.

Mr. THORN: That may be so. I will not ask his private opinion because he has a job to do, and while he does it so well I am sure we shall all be proud of him. I am pleased that the Government is preparing to purchase properties and get them ready to the extent of an expenditure of £120,000 in the near future. It has been stated that the director expects to have 500 men engaged in the task of preparing properties for settlement at no distant date. That is very essential. Many properties require to be overhauled, reconditioned as to fences, homes, etc. That is a very necessary part of the scheme, and should be done before men are placed on their holdings. One point struck me as being very helpful. I know that the present policy is not to settle the men on the land until the scheme is well forward and practically wholly prepared, but I feel it would be a good move to allot some of the properties, so that the men to whom they were allotted might work on them.

The Minister for Lands: The properties would have to be balloted for.

Mr. THORN: The successful soldier might be permitted to work on the property allotted to him by ballot. He would work on it with enthusiasm and would inspire the other workers. He would make the property a good asset for himself.

The Minister for Lands: I agree with that.

Mr. THORN: He would also be a great help to the director.

The Minister for Lands: I think he would.

Mr. THORN: And, as I said, he would encourage the other men to pull their weight. I thought I would make that suggestion.

The Minister for Lands: A very good one.

Mr. THORN: I was surprised to note that out of 304 ex-servicemen applying for land, only 19, according to the figures furnished by the Minister to the House, were found to be unsuitable. That is a remarkable result. It is gratifying. It indicates that the right type of man is offering himself. The fact that an early announcement was made to the effect that the soldiers must prove their suitability for land settlement has prevented a number of unsuitable men from making application, and therefore we shall not have the failures in this scheme that we had in the schemes inaugurated after the 1914-18 war. I wish to comment on a weak set-up in the scheme. It will retard the scheme if it is not rectified. I refer

to the purchase of properties. I understand that the Government or the commission must, before purchasing a property, refer the matter to Canberra. That is a retrograde step. Canberra should be prepared to trust the management of this scheme to the responsible people in this State, and the commission should not be compelled to hang up any purchase by having to refer it to Canberra for approval.

Mr. Watts: Hear, hear!

Mr. THORN: The Bill also gives soldiers a right of appeal. That, after all, is only British justice and in accordance with our democracy. If a soldier is dissatisfied with a decision of the commission, he should have the right to appeal against it. I think it essential that there should be some speeding-up of the rural training scheme. Soldiers already partially qualified should be set to work at once with practical men in order to complete their training. Such a course would greatly assist the commissioner in placing some of the applicants. If we must wait until the war is finally over, the commissioner will be so rushed with applications that he will not know which way to turn. It is only good generalship that we should get these soldiers settled at the earliest possible moment on holdings, so that they may be completely trained and ready to take up their properties when these are available. It is with great pleasure that I support this Bill to ratify the Commonwealth agreement. I feel certain that we shall succeed with the scheme in this State if we are given a certain amount of freedom and are not harassed by Canberra interference and red tape methods. I wish the director and all those associated with him every success. It is a tremendous job and a most important job. I have always stoutly maintained that one of our best avenues for the rehabilitation of soldiers in this State is land settlement. I wish the scheme every success.

MR. BERRY (Irwin-Moore) [6.6]: I shall not delay the House long. I would like to express to those responsible for drawing up this agreement my congratulations, for what they are worth. I shall not thrash out the point so often dealt with by members of this House, as well as by the public, to the effect that we made a mess of our last land settlement scheme. That, I am sorry to say, does not matter

very much now, so long as we profit by the errors we made and make sure that we do not fall headlong into the same pitfalls on this occasion. I cannot read this agreement without feeling that it has been prepared by extremely capable men. I know the present Premier, when Minister for Lands, did a most excellent job in connection with rural reconstruction. I believe he had a most harassing time when doing that work. If it is any satisfaction to him, as well as to Mr. Fyfe, who assisted him, to know that they prepared something which, as far as I can see, nobody can point the finger of scorn at, they will have that satisfaction. There are one or two points regarding post-war reconstruction of this nature which must be borne in mind. To me, the first consideration is to ensure that power is made available in Western Australia, particularly in the agricultural parts which we are now discussing. Power won the war; it is going to win the peace. The nation which has a grip—the largest grip—on power will get away with all these schemes while other countries fail.

I should like to have heard from the Minister, to whose speech last Tuesday night I listened with great interest, that some arrangement had been made to provide this power in such a way that the whole community could take advantage of it. With adequate power, we could make improvements in a very short time that otherwise would take 10 or 12 years under the methods which we have now outgrown. Apart from that, power will save the country many thousands of pounds. In fact, without the power which I am stressing I do not think any agricultural country will be able to compete in the world markets in the future. Another point in the Bill has worried me. It is really not a Bill; it is a curious piece of legislation, it is an agreement. I only wish we could discuss it clause by clause before reaching the Committee stage, but apparently that is not possible. We were told that this Bill provides that a settler may or may not, at his own discretion, acquire the assets on the property, that is, he will lease the property itself for 999 years, but he may acquire the assets on it. I hope that at the end of that period he will have done some good with the property.

The point I make is this: Unless the person on the land has a direct interest in

the holding itself, unless we can persuade him to believe that it is his own and his life's work, his interest will not be in the property. The member for Toodyay skated round that point and seemed to be desirous of making the land freehold. It does not matter whether it is freehold or not. It may be better leasehold. I am inclined to think that the headaches about which the member for Toodyay spoke when he mentioned some settler elsewhere will not be experienced. Unless the individual settler has an interest in the improvements on the land, what is to prevent him from walking off after a bad season and saying, "Goodbye, chaps, I did not do too well last season, so I am leaving"?

The Minister for Lands: He will have the right to purchase structural improvements.

Mr. BERRY: He has the right, but I am suggesting that he should be encouraged to purchase them.

The Minister for Lands: He will be, too.

Mr. BERRY: He would then own assets which I presume he would be able to sell. If I erect ten pig-styes on such a property and sell them, I should be entitled to receive their value, less perhaps depreciation. I presume that depreciation of assets will be paid for as follows:—By the Commonwealth Government, two-thirds and the State Government, one-third. In all the circumstances, I personally cannot see how anybody can do otherwise than give this Bill his blessing. Mistakes are bound to arise. We are certain to find that something which we are lauding today is not working out in practice, but I have no doubt that all those matters can be smoothed over and put right. We know that for this State—indeed for Australia as a whole—agriculture is of prime importance. Western Australia is an agricultural State.

It is equally important to ensure that the social amenities enjoyed by some city dwellers are made available to every farmer in the country, not only under this scheme but under any land settlement scheme. We should encourage the supply of amenities like refrigerators at a price which will make them readily available in the country. We should put our foot down strongly on what has been going on for so many years; refer to the exploiting of the country people. That must be stopped. Unless it is, the scheme will not succeed. I have just com

back from the country where a few days ago I found the heat most oppressive. Without a refrigerator and without iced beer, life is very poor in the country. I have no doubt that the returned soldiers will be able to arrange for their own supplies of beer. The point I make is that country people must have facilities and amenities equal to those enjoyed by people in the city. If we do not want this scheme to succeed, let us employ our old methods; let the soldiers kill a sheep and lose it the next day because of the weather and because they have no refrigerators. Let them suffer all the privations which we have suffered in the past!

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. BERRY: I had started to deal with some of the amenities but had got no further than to stress the need for refrigerators. I make the point clear that all the amenities possible must go to the country to make a scheme of this sort secure and attractive. We have to make life in the country attractive if people are to stay there. The water question is one of the biggest problems in this State. We are certainly dealing with it now up to a point, but every farm under this or any other settlement scheme, or under any economic scheme, should have adequate and clean water near the house, available to the housewife. In Western Australia we have the deplorable position of people travelling miles to get water—dirty, evil, swampy, foul-smelling water—and bringing it back to the housewife and saying, "You must make do with this and no other." We have men travelling 20 miles to get such water and then we expect them to farm the land! These are some of the considerations which, if taken in hand, will make this theoretical scheme practical.

The water question is one of our most vexed problems. We should have water for every homestead. We are working out all sorts of grandiose schemes to pipe water, but it cannot be piped to every holding that will be taken up under the provisions of this Bill. When reading through the agreement I saw mention of the word "Forces." I had hoped that that meant we were at last paying due and proper regard to people overseas, particularly those of England who had served and helped us in this war and who had protected us equally in the previous war.

But when I looked through the agreement again during the tea adjournment I was sorry to see that the definition of "Member of the Forces" is the same as that in Section 4 of the Commonwealth Re-employment and Re-establishment Act, 1945. I have not seen that particular measure but can only assume that it means that Imperial ex-servicemen will not be able to derive any benefit from this scheme.

Mr. Seward: That is not so.

Mr. BERRY: I would like the Minister to tell me that. I am assured by the member for Pingelly that that is not so, but I cannot find any provision under which these good folk will be allowed in. In order to encourage migration we are going to pay their passages to come here, and the moment they arrive they are civilians; and, as far as this Act is concerned, it seems that they will remain civilians. I trust that when the Minister replies he will assure me, and the House that the question of Imperial ex-servicemen will be given more than due consideration; that it will be given commonsense consideration. Here is an opportunity for us to bring to Australia, and to settle in this country under the best conditions, decent people such as Australia needs. In conclusion I again express my thanks to the Minister, to Mr. Fyfe and to the Premier for the hard work they have done in bringing forward such an excellent measure.

MR. McLARTY (Murray-Wellington) [7.35]: The Minister when introducing the Bill said that we would profit by our experience of soldier settlement after the 1914-18 war. I hope we will. We have certainly had a lesson in soldier settlement, and a very good lesson. Our men after the previous war were settled in just about every line of farming.

Mr. Watts: And in every way.

Mr. McLARTY: Yes. The Minister told us that after the 1914-18 war 5,000 soldiers were settled on the land and that of the 5,000 only one-third remained. He attributed the failure—if it can be called failure—or gave as the reasons for those two-thirds of them leaving, the incidence of drought, the depression and the unsuitability of many of the men and women who went on the land. Some of these difficulties can be overcome. The Minister has told us that care will be taken to see that unsuitable people are not placed on

the land. I daresay the Minister realises that considerable pressure will be brought to bear upon him to put certain unsuitable people on to the land.

The Premier: And on to unsuitable land.

Mr. McLARTY: Yes.

The Minister for Lands: We will have to withstand that pressure.

Mr. McLARTY: I have no doubt that pressure will be exerted by politicians and others and that injustices will be claimed in connection with certain applications that will be rejected, and it is likely that certain injustices will be done. But the Minister is on the right track. He is following out the recommendations of the Rural Reconstruction Commission when he says that care will be exercised to see that not only the right men but the right women as well will be put on the land. We did see the misfits after the previous war, but at that time there was an opinion abroad that no real qualifications were needed for a man to go on the land; that one had only to go on the land to make a success of it. We know that is entirely wrong. If ever qualifications are needed they are needed by those who are going to follow these pursuits. Anyhow, this will be a large land settlement scheme. If one reads the history of such schemes, throughout the world, one will come across many failures, and the Minister is optimistic indeed if he thinks he can initiate a scheme such as this and not have some failures. Again I repeat that our experience of soldier settlement after the 1914-18 war should assist us, to a considerable extent, to obviate such failures.

The Minister also said that he was not going to be stampeded. I think he is right there. I have heard it said that he is not being stampeded. A good deal of the failure of land settlement in the past can be attributed to the hurried methods that were adopted. There was the cry to go on the land and the resultant rush to put people on the land without the careful preparation that was needed. Again I think the Minister will have to be on his guard because I believe attempts will be made to stampede him in regard to this particular scheme. No doubt the commissioner and his advisers will be looking for land in safe areas. Land that was not considered suitable for settlement after

the 1914-18 war will be considered suitable now, and is suitable. Some of the best dairy farms in my district are established on land which, 25 or 30 years ago, we regarded as poor land. With the advent of subterranean clover, drainage and superphosphate that class of land has been completely revolutionised. In fact its carrying capacity is, I think, equal to any other land in the district.

One of the great pitfalls of our last soldier settlement scheme arose through allowing the soldiers to purchase land by private negotiation. By that I mean that the soldier went to a particular person, or some person offered him a property, and in his anxiety to obtain it he practically made his own terms. Those who sold land to soldiers in that way were not actuated by patriotic motives, and they obtained the very last penny, without a doubt. Not only that, but they obtained a price in excess of the real value of the land. However, I notice that that is being guarded against this time. We will be repurchasing land on this occasion, and many of those who will be selling land will be soldier settlers of the previous war. They are entitled to a fair price for the land they sell, and I hope there will not be any effort to try to beat them down. There is no reason why owners of land should contribute more towards repatriation than any other section of the community.

Provision is made that, where land is considered to be excessive in price, the Government can write it down to what it considers to be the fair value. Whilst I do not want to see the Government exploited by paying excessive prices for land, I do not want to see a landowner receive other than a just price. The Minister told us that he proposed to ask certain farmers to take soldier settlers and to train them for a while. I think he mentioned a period of 12 months. It is a very good idea, but great care should be exercised in this regard. If we want to make a man a slovenly or inefficient farmer for all time, put him with a slovenly or inefficient farmer!

The Minister for Lands: That applies to almost any trade.

Mr. McLARTY: The Minister is quite right.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Even a bad apple makes good apples bad.

Mr. McLARTY: Yes. When I was thinking about this matter, my mind conjured up the names of numbers of successful farmers who could, I believe, train these young men very well. However, a difficulty arises. It is hard for farmers to get domestic help, and if they are to take one or two of these young men on to their properties it will throw more work on to their wives. That does present a very real difficulty, one to which I suggest the Minister should give some consideration. Then again the Minister's suggestion that he will ask road boards to form district committees is quite good. We all know that the road board is the most responsible body in a district. It is there for all time and it has its permanent officials. I am not afraid of anything but fair treatment being extended to soldier settlers, because on almost every road board throughout Western Australia there is already a fair sprinkling of returned men.

The Minister hopes to have 500 farms available within a year and I trust his anticipation will be realised. The fact that 3,000 farms is his objective indicates that he will be kept very busy. It is quite impossible to settle 3,000 men on farms all at once, and most decidedly it will take time. Furthermore I have no doubt that before that objective is reached there will be a clamour for migrants, and considerable pressure will be brought to bear upon the Minister to speed up with a land settlement scheme for migrants. Beyond all question, the first people to be considered are our own returned men. The Minister made reference to the use of machinery which he said would greatly reduce the costs with regard to farming generally. I can assure him that that is not always so, and it is a matter that requires watching. I can give him some examples of farmers being ruined because of the use of machinery which has made their operations much more expensive. While I agree that farming can be conducted more economically with the use of machinery, care has to be used in that regard. As to the adoption of the leasehold system, most Australians have engraved on their minds a desire to secure freehold properties if they possibly can. Certain parts of the Commonwealth propose to give soldier settlers freehold properties.

The Minister for Lands: But, of course, the States will pay for it.

Mr. McLARTY: That is so. While some States intend to adopt that course, other States, of which Western Australia is one, propose to adopt the leasehold system. The proposals as outlined by the Minister appear to me to be generous and will certainly give the soldier settler encouragement. I have read a good deal about the freehold and leasehold systems of land tenure and I do not say that the leasehold system has not a good deal to commend it. On the other hand, I agree with the member for Toodyay that as time goes on we should give the soldier settlers an opportunity to convert their leasehold properties to freehold if they so desire. I hope, too, that there will be no effort made to persuade intending settlers to take up a certain line of farming in which they may not be interested at all. It is useless to say to a man, "You go in for dairying," if that man is keen on going in for sheep and wool.

I know from past experience in regard to the dairying industry how essential it is that men and women who participate in it should be interested in dairying activities and be lovers of stock. We had examples in connection with the group settlement scheme when men and women went on to dairy farms although totally unsuited to the work. We know what a mess they made of their holdings. It may be said that for economic reasons men should go in for certain agricultural pursuits. I have lost faith in those people that try to prophesy what future markets will be for primary products over a long term. I have heard it said that certain primary products would be so plentiful as to constitute gluts and therefore there was no hope in that direction. Yet within a very few years good markets were available for those commodities! That will probably be so in the future.

There is a demand for just about every class of primary product in some part of the world. If the international markets are properly organised, as they should be, the future for primary production must be bright. I urge the Minister to let the settler go in for the type of farming in which he is most interested and for which he is best adapted. The Bill itself reads very much like the report of the Commonwealth Rural Reconstruction Commission. Its

clauses remind me of many sections of that report. I believe that if the recommendations of the Rural Reconstruction Commissioners are followed, soldier settlement, not only in this State but throughout the Commonwealth, will be an undoubted success.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [7.54]: I listened with great interest to the Minister for Lands when he introduced the measure he brought before the House to ratify the agreement between the Commonwealth and the State as to soldier settlement. So far as it went the Minister's speech was a good one but the trouble was, in my opinion, that he did not go nearly far enough. There were a great many things to which he made no reference and concerning which there is little or no information about the House. Many questions are being asked, over which there is likely to be a great deal of argument unless the Minister is prepared to give the required information when he replies to this debate. To begin with, the Minister made no attempt to define the meaning of the second paragraph of the agreement with regard to what are termed "eligible persons."

I have during the week, as he is aware, been to two country centres where great interest is taken in soldier settlement matters, particularly as there are a great many soldier settlers there who belong to a rather strong sub-branch of the Returned Soldiers' League, and those men have been looking back to the days of their own attempts at land settlement many years ago. One of the men had managed to obtain a copy of the Bill and the first thing he put to me when I met the men, was as to what was meant by the portion of the agreement which set out that an eligible person was one included in a class of persons, if any, which the Commonwealth, with the concurrence of the State, determined should be deemed eligible to participate in land settlement under the scheme. I replied to him, "I am sure I do not know"—and it is not often that I make that statement. I do not know, and in the circumstances I was not prepared to express an opinion in fairness to everyone concerned. I should have imagined that was one of the first things to which the Minister would have made reference when he set to work, apparently, to give us his views

of the measure and to interpret its intentions to the best of his ability.

The Minister for Lands: I thought it could be done better in Committee.

MR. WATTS: The Minister might have saved himself a lot of argument and a great deal more, to which I shall come in the future, if he had explained the position. I take it the Minister was in this frame of mind that, having taken up so much of the time he considered at his disposal for a resume of past happenings and future hopes, he decided that there was no more time left to deal with things that seem to me, and perhaps to other members as well, to be of major importance regarding the proposal that is now before us. However, having raised the point I shall suspend judgment on that particular portion of the agreement until the Minister has had an opportunity to explain what it is intended to mean or what he interprets to be its meaning. I can assure him that it is capable of many interpretations—certainly more than one. The next item that attracted my attention, during a careful perusal of the provisions of this document, was the one which refers to the settlers earning a "reasonable labour income." I immediately looked for a definition of a labour income and what a reasonable labour income might be. I have my own idea as to what it means, but my ideas on this subject—I shall not say they are totally valueless—are of little value by comparison, I should say, with the determination of those who made this agreement and of those who are going to interpret it. If we can be given a reasonable interpretation of what this term is intended to mean, we may find it to be quite satisfactory.

I can assure the Minister that I do not propose to be hypercritical, but I object most strongly to being left in the position that I do not know what a term may mean when it depends upon words which may have many meanings. I went further into the agreement and found that adequate guidance and technical advice are to be made available to settlers through agricultural extension services. I am strongly in favour of technical advice being made available especially by skilled persons, and I have not the slightest doubt that an effort will be made to place such skilled persons in a position enabling them to give advice to the best possible advantage.

We have frequently been told that the mistakes made in past land settlement schemes must not be repeated, and with that remark I entirely agree, but there are not lacking instances in the past where the guidance or direction of various inspectors and other persons was of little or no value to the settler. In fact, some people 20 or 30 years ago who were placed in charge of the matter of giving guidance were rather less competent than was the settler himself, and in consequence the acceptance of the guidance placed the settler in a more difficult position than he would have been without it. He was required to do this or not to do that against his better judgment, and he did it or did not do it as the case might be because, if he took an opposite course, he was to be deprived of some material benefit which otherwise would come his way—at least it appeared to be a material benefit at the time, although subsequently it became a liability that he could not repay.

So I wish to be assured that, in the giving of this adequate guidance, there will not be any compulsory directions as to what a man shall do in the matter of his farming operations. I say this because the whole tenor of the scheme is that a man shall not go upon the land unless he either is suitably trained, in which case he can obtain assistance fairly soon, or has undergone a period of training, in which case his settlement will be delayed. Thus in every case before he obtains a holding under this scheme, he will be in a position substantially to determine what methods he should adopt to the best advantage of the property, and therefore he will not require guidance and information as a means of compelling him to take some course that he does not wish to take, although it might be eminently desirable by way of advice and nobody would put any restriction on that aspect of it. I will leave it to the Minister to tell us his views before I say any more on that point.

I find, too, that the State is to initiate proposals for settlement under the scheme and the Commonwealth may initiate proposals where these are directly associated with any matter in respect of which the Commonwealth has power to make laws. I know something of the Commonwealth Constitution, not very much, but sufficient usually to keep out of mischief, and I know that the Commonwealth has power to make

laws on a great variety of subjects and is constantly clamouring for the opportunity to make laws on a great many more subjects. In fact, not only did it clamour but even when the electors refused the Commonwealth the right to do so—

Mr. Mann: It defied them.

Mr. WATTS: Defied them or obtained the right by subterfuge. Here again it was the duty of the Minister for Lands, in my humble judgment, to inform the House what in his belief are the intentions that underlay this interesting paragraph. When a point is ignored, people who have given any attention to constitutional history in Australia are inclined to be a little suspicious. They ask: Why was this important matter left out? What is the nigger in the woodpile? Perhaps there is no nigger in the woodpile.

The Minister for Lands: Not even a woodpile!

Mr. WATTS: But it would have been so easy and, as a fact, it is customary for the Minister to make such an explanation, so far as one can make it in an important matter of this sort, when moving the second reading, and not place me in the situation of being obliged to offer criticism in order to arouse the hon. gentleman from his lethargy. Once again there is yet time for him; at least I hope there is.

Now I come to the question of perpetual leasehold. I am one of those who are prepared to subscribe to the system of perpetual leasehold as being desirable. I think that in probably 95 cases out of a hundred, it would be not only desirable but also acceptable, and to the principle of it, I raise not the slightest objection. I see no difficulty in the great majority of cases. In fact, I see many a man being better served than he would be by the old type of mortgage freehold method. At the same time we know that there are people, as the member for Murray-Wellington said, who have a great fancy for obtaining the fee simple. I would suggest that these people should be allowed to have the fee simple on the terms we have dealt with in the past when they had the fee simple and also the liability. That does not seem to me, except in very rare cases, to be desirable.

However, I do think that to impose upon everybody, no matter what his circumstances in the future might be, the obligation to remain as a leaseholder is hardly reason-

able. I would say that if a man, after holding a property for perhaps five years, is in a financial position, either through his own earnings, through a stroke of good fortune or the bounty of a relative, deceased or otherwise, or for some other reason, to pay all that is owing upon the property and take it over as of his own right free of encumbrances, he should be entitled to do so. I would go a little further and put the case where a man might very reasonably wish to do such a thing. A leaseholder under this agreement, if he transfers the lease with the consent of the Crown, is to receive the value of the essential improvements that he has placed upon the property.

The Minister for Lands: He is entitled to that.

Mr. WATTS: Undoubtedly he is entitled to that, but he might also be entitled to something more, and I shall suggest what it might be. The agreement provides that he is entitled to the value of the essential improvements, but as a perpetual leaseholder and with no option, suppose he comes into money and decides that he will build a home that he thinks he and his family deserve. Suppose he spends £2,000 upon a home! There would be no cost to the Crown, because it would be money that he has obtained by a stroke of good fortune or from a relative. A few years afterwards, for some reason or other, he finds he has to transfer the property with the consent of the Crown. The £2,000 home is not essential. He would be lucky if he got £750 or some smaller amount for an improvement of that character. So, because he could not acquire the freehold, he is either not going to have the home that he wants or must erect and live in a home somewhere else, or lose £1,250. That is why it seems to me that if a man is in a position to pay all the obligations he owes upon the land out of his own money, he should be entitled to an option to acquire the freehold or fee simple of the property.

Mr. Mann: The fertility of the land, too, might have been increased by him.

Mr. WATTS: I am coming to the question of increased fertility of the land. Dealing with the question of the improvement in the event of the lease being surrendered or terminated, the Commonwealth would pay compensation for any improvements that are essential to the working of the property.

Will the Minister tell us whether those improvements are going to include anything in respect of the increased fertility of the soil occasioned by the activities of the holder during his tenure? Quite apart from other aspects of the matter, when the superphosphate shortage occurred three or four years ago, we were assured by officers of the Department of Agriculture that although farmers had been accustomed to using 90 lbs. of super or more per acre for their wheat crops each year, and were to be allowed a ration of only 32 lbs. per acre, it would be quite all right for two or three years because of the residual value of the earlier dressings of superphosphate. Somewhat similar claims were put forward and to a degree substantiated in regard to top dressing.

We know that in the Old Country improvements of that nature are given far greater consideration than they are here. Admittedly the farming methods are different, but the principle involved is the same. If there is a substantial residual value as a result of earlier dressings of super or other manures to such an extent as to represent reasonably the difference between 32 lbs. and 90 lbs., of superphosphate over two or three years, I ask myself: Is the leaseholder who may have been on the holding for a very long period of years—even if 999 years is not perpetual, it is a very long time—to receive any or no return for the increased fertility of the soil through his activities or the activities of those associated with the land during the intervening years?

Then there is the aspect: What improvements are going to be considered essential? How are we to be assured that the Commonwealth will determine that improvements that are effected are essential or otherwise? Is a rabbit-netted fence essential if a man considers it is, or is he to be paid for a six wire fence because the Commonwealth authorities consider rabbit netting is not essential? I venture to say there are many cases where those questions will hereafter arise and if we cannot have them clearly determined in the agreement, at least we might have some idea of what was the basis on which these matters were discussed.

I have very great respect for Mr. Fyfe, the Director of Land Settlement, who, I understand, was responsible for a great part of the negotiations on this matter. I have not the slightest doubt that many aspects

such as these were included in the consideration he gave to the matter, or the reports that were made by or to him or that otherwise reached the files of the department. But we certainly have not heard one word about that from the Minister for Lands. For all that he told us last week in the course of an otherwise excellent address, the matters that were dealt with in this agreement might never have received any more consideration than the mere dictating and typing of them. It is a curious fact that I knew that they did receive a lot more consideration than that; but I think we are entitled to be told at least some of the reasons for the decisions arrived at in this agreement. I am prepared to concede that in all probability those reasons are in most respects ample; but, up to the moment, so far as the records of this House go, they are virtually non-existent, and I do not think that is altogether desirable. That dispenses with the agreement itself for the time being; and, in conclusion, I propose to say a few general words.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: That agreement took a lot of talking about.

Mr. WATTS: I do not doubt it did; and I want to know some of the reasons that underlie some of the propositions in it, as I have been trying to explain. I know only too well that the job is not going to be an easy one. I feel that it is in moderately safe hands—in some respects, in very safe hands. I wish, in order to enable me to apply the second phrase to the whole of the matter, that there was less of the Commonwealth in this business. I have a feeling in the back of my mind that there has been a long-drawn out argument in order to make this agreement as acceptable as it is, although it is not altogether acceptable to me. But we are in this fortunate, or unfortunate position, depending on the way one looks at it: We must have a land settlement scheme for members of the Forces in Western Australia. This one is offered to us. In many aspects, it is desirable. If we do not accept it, we shall delay the matter, I take it, very considerably; and it has already been far too long delayed. Four or five times that aspect of the matter has received attention in this House.

The Federal legislation which enabled this agreement to be made by the Common-

wealth Government was passed only a few weeks ago. It was first mentioned as coming before the Commonwealth Parliament early last year. In November 1944, it was to be dealt with; in February 1945, it was to receive attention. It received attention, however, only in the last few weeks. In my opinion there has been too much slowness on the part of the Commonwealth authorities; so that instead of the foundation-stones of this agreement having been all laid and in order a year ago, as they should have been, they were not in that position until a few weeks ago. The difficulties that have been imposed upon the State authorities in consequence are, in my view, very considerable. We find the Director of Land Settlement—eager to press forward, eager to answer every question placed before him in a manner which will give a definite reply to his inquirers—obliged to say, "I anticipate this will be so. I hope this will be so. I expect this will be so. But it must await the passage of legislation."

That state of affairs was reached three months after the cessation of hostilities. It does not reflect any great credit on the Commonwealth Government, which has been telling us for between two and three years of the wonderful achievements that have been planned in respect of soldier settlement and other post-war reconstruction. In my view it reflects no credit at all. The credit, if there be any credit due, is upon the State authorities; and I only wish that they were in complete control of this matter without any Commonwealth interference at all. I support the second reading.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly) [8.21]: I am pleased this Bill has at last come before the House; because, as the Leader of the Opposition has said, and as previous speakers have pointed out, it is one that has been awaited for a very long time. But, like the Leader of the Opposition, I require quite a lot of information before I can support it. I shall vote for the second reading; but there is a good deal of information I shall want before I shall consider the Bill acceptable. Strangely enough, the first hurdle I came to was also paragraph (b) of the definition of "eligible person." I think that is the first paragraph which I have been asked to explain by people who have read the Bill.

I can put one explanation on it but I do not want to give that particular explanation. I think that if it were left to the State Government, there would be no question that it did not mean what I have in mind; but as it comes from the Commonwealth Government I want an explanation of what it means. Then there is the clause in which appear the words—

Settlement shall be undertaken only where economic prospects for the production concerned are reasonably sound.

That sounds very good but I want to know who is going to say whether or not the prospects are reasonably sound. Who is the authority to make that decision? That is a very important matter. Some people say that we cannot export some of our products. For instance, we are told that we cannot export mutton. At present, we cannot do so; but I am not convinced that the fullest attempts have been made to create an export market for mutton and for some other primary products. Take preserved fruits! I have not been there, but I am told—and I have no reason to doubt the accuracy of the statement—that if one goes to the islands north of Australia, one will find preserved fruits that have been produced in America. For the life of me, I cannot see why Australia should allow America to beat her with preserved fruits in those islands north of Australia.

There is no finer article in the world than the preserved pineapples, peaches and apricots that come from this country. I know that they are not favourably considered in England and other places, simply because they are supplied in tin containers. If the consumer wants the products in glass containers then they must be supplied in the way he wants them supplied. I want to know who is the authority who is going to say whether concerns are reasonably sound or not; and we are entitled to that information before we are asked to approve of this particular measure. Other clauses were dealt with by the Leader of the Opposition, and I do not want to touch on them again. I come to one which states that—

The State shall subdivide, develop and improve the land to a stage where it can be brought into production by a settler within a reasonable time having regard to the type of production proposed.

Who is going to determine what is a reasonable time? I am guided in these observations

very much by the fact that in the previous history of our land settlement schemes we have had people in authority—inspectors, principally, of the Agricultural Bank—who have been failures in their own individual concerns, and who, having failed in their efforts at farming, have been appointed to those positions to determine policy and to dictate to settlers. That is a system I do not think anybody can possibly support. So we want to know whether those particular people are going to determine whether a settler has had a reasonable time in which to get into production; and, if not, who is so to determine. In a later clause it is stated—

An eligible person may apply to participate under the scheme not more than five years after—

1, the fifteenth day of August, One thousand nine hundred and forty-five.

There again, in view of the fact that under the definition of "eligible person" some of this land may be given to people who are not members of the Forces, I do not think it is reasonable to impose the restriction that application must be made by members of the Forces not more than five years after the 15th August, 1945.

The Minister for Lands: Do you not think that is sufficient time for a man to have made up his mind?

Mr. SEWARD: Generally speaking it may be. But one never can tell! Some of these men will be young. They may follow a certain avocation and find later on that indoor life is no good for them, and then they must engage in some outdoor occupation, as has frequently happened in the past. Their health may not be able to stand up to indoor work. Members can recall instances of people whose health has failed, and, if this can occur to men who have not undergone the rigors of war, it is reasonable to anticipate that it will occur to young men who have returned from the war. They may find after more than five years that they have to give up indoor life and go outside. Yet under this provision they would be debarred from taking up land under this scheme. That is wrong and the provision should be removed. These men should be given the fullest opportunity to take up land under advantageous conditions, if they find they made a mistake in going into a certain other

invocation in the first instance. The measure also provides that—

The Commonwealth in consultation with the State will arrange with an authority in that State to make advances to settlers.

I am surprised that the Government did not stipulate who the authority should be. I would not be surprised if it provided that the Rural and Industries Bank was the authority; but the provision is merely somebody who shall be agreed upon by the Commonwealth and the State. This was an excellent opportunity to give some business to the Rural Bank and I may move an amendment along those lines in Committee. Another clause that arouses my suspicion provides that a lease will not be transferable by the settler except by the consent of the Commonwealth and State.

The Leader of the Opposition said he was not particularly opposed to leasehold in contradistinction to freehold. I can say the same thing. I prefer leasehold, because I do not think it comes within the power of the Government today to dispose of the freehold of this country. That belongs to the people of the country. I know there will be the objection that one cannot mortgage leasehold, but, no matter what the system, I think the financial institutions will overcome the difficulty. I think the major stumbling block with leasehold is that the holder of the lease should be safeguarded as to the transferring of the lease to his family. Could a settler arrange that the property be transferred to his family in the event of his death? Under this measure, the settler cannot transfer the lease except with the consent of the Commonwealth and State, but I think he should have the safeguard that the work he has put into the property will go to members of his family.

Another clause provides for the investigation and determination of matters arising between the settler and the Commonwealth and the State, if the Commonwealth and State agree, but that is too wide. It would leave the door open to endless arguments. If there is a matter about which the settler is discontented, he should have a right to refer it to a specific tribunal, without the right being curtailed in this way. I wish to thank the Minister for having a map displayed in the Chamber to give members an idea of where the land in question

is. When making my request, my object was to try to get some indication of where land is being made available for soldier settlement. When I looked at the map, I saw a lot of white and red marks on the area which is sandplain between Moora and the coast. That is valuable country, where it is joined with first-class country, but I would not like to see soldiers placed on it.

I have had several instances brought to my notice of where large tracts of what is possibly our best land have been bought recently. I heard of one instance of 17,000 acres of excellent land being bought, within the last two years, by a man who already holds one, if not more, large property. I think that matter was mentioned in this House during the war, as to the need for preserving that type of land. I heard of another block of about 10,000 acres being secured by a man who already has one big holding. Those are the areas that I want to see reserved for soldiers, so that they will have more than an even chance of success. A man told me today that soldiers would be put out near Southern Cross, but I said I did not think anyone would do that.

The Minister for Lands: Someone is looking for an argument, saying that sort of thing.

Mr. SEWARD: I want that statement refuted by details of where the properties are to be. The Minister did not tell us very much and, after looking at "Hansard," I think the Commonwealth Parliament gave less information than the Minister gave us. The Commonwealth only told of the bad things done in land settlement in the past. We want the details regarding future operations given to us. One case was mentioned to me today and, if the information turns out to be correct, I will ask for the papers to be laid on the Table of the House. It was the case of a young man, whose father is a successful farmer whom I have known for years, who was born on the farm and reared there, and who joined the R.A.A.F., being awarded the D.F.C. and bar. I was told that he appeared before the board and was informed that he was not qualified to hold land. I have not been able to verify that, but will do so. I am concerned about the people who may have the running of this scheme. I do not refer to the director, who is a highly qualified man, but perhaps to the men

on local committees. We should make sure that they are the best. The Minister explained that there are to be five men on each local committee, but at that time I interjected that I thought three would be ample.

The Minister for Lands: Three would be ample if you could guarantee to get them together on every occasion.

Mr. SEWARD: We had three on the committee last time, in my own district, and they turned up whenever they were wanted and did the work wonderfully well. Three men who know the district will give better results than will five, because the larger the number the more the diversity of opinion. These are the people about whom we have to be particularly careful, especially when there is no board to which the soldier can appeal. I hope we shall be able to amend the schedule to make it plainer, unless the Minister can clear up our doubts when speaking in reply, in which case I shall be pleased to support the Bill.

MR. LESLIE (Mt. Marshall) [8.40]: It is necessary for members to be clear that this is not an agreement to implement the soldier settlement scheme. There is a certain number of people who think this is a soldier land settlement scheme. This is an agreement for certain proposals with a view to the settlement on the land in this State of discharged members of the Forces and other eligible persons, which is broad enough for anyone; but, because ex-servicemen are to come under this measure, I am interested in it and welcome its introduction. It is something for which ex-servicemen have been waiting for a long time. In introducing the Bill, the Minister said he hoped it would not be made a political football. I hope so, too, and assure him that I will assist in seeing that the measure—though it is far from being as satisfactory as we would wish—gets on the statute-book, so that we can make a start in soldier settlement. There are today many men—the Minister is probably in a better position to give the numbers than I am—who are interested in soldier settlement, and many who have already put in applications. A lot of these men either believe they will be trained to go on the land or hope they will be selected

as settlers, and are following no occupation at present.

In the report of the Rural Reconstruction Commission on Soldier Settlement, one of the recommendations was that the settler should be encouraged to assist in his establishment by the use of his own financial resources. A good many intending settlers have a fair amount of money at present, anything from £200 to £1,000, but under present conditions that money is being dissipated. There is, therefore, urgency for this measure to be put on the statute-book and implemented as soon as possible. When introducing the Bill, the Minister mentioned losses incurred by ex-servicemen under the old land settlement scheme. There were losses, due to definite causes, and those who took a close interest in soldier settlement matters after the last war—the Minister was one of them—are aware of the circumstances that occasioned those losses. The R.S.L. prepared and submitted to the Rural Reconstruction Commission evidence dealing with the old land settlement scheme, and submitted a draft Bill as the basis for a future scheme. In dealing with the losses occasioned to settlers under the old scheme, Sir Gilbert Dyett, on behalf of the R.S.L., submitted the following evidence to the Rural Reconstruction Commission:—

Causes of Failure.—Without any intention to condemn the scheme or the object it sought to achieve, it has been far from successful, and there have been many failures. In most cases, the prices paid for repurchased estates were too high, owners and vendors profiting by inflated prices. In addition to the purchase price there were the costs of survey, subdivision, water, housing, fencing, stock, plant and sustenance. The general rate of interest was far too high, and penal interest accruing on unpaid interest had a disastrous effect on the settler.

A further disturbing factor was the dual control of finance and the multiplicity of accounts. There were separate Crown lease rents, repurchase accounts, I.A.B. accounts, Agricultural Bank accounts, S.S.S. accounts, water and irrigation charges—all helped to confuse the settler.

It was because of the fact that we were so well alive to the difficulties which had beset the soldier-settler under the previous scheme that, in the recommendations which we submitted in our draft proposal to the Rural Reconstruction Commission, the R.S.L. said that complete control and financial responsibility for soldier settlement should rest

with the Commonwealth Government. We realise, of course, although some of us were not particularly enamoured of Commonwealth control, that the purse was in the hands of the Commonwealth Government. Because of that fact, it was the only Government that could reasonably accept sole financial responsibility and sole financial control; hence our recommendation. The agreement provides that the Commonwealth, in consultation with the State, will arrange with an authority in the State to make advances to settlers for the purpose of providing working capital and paying for and effecting improvements, and acquiring stock, plant and equipment. Here, right at the outset, we see a departure from one of the principles that we suggested would avoid embarrassment and possibility of loss. To start with, we do not know who this financial authority is going to be, nor do we know the terms upon which it is going to make advances to the settlers.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: You could make a very good guess.

Mr. LESLIE: I am afraid I cannot.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: The Rural Bank.

Mr. LESLIE: That is one. How do I know that the Land Settlement Board is not going to be provided with funds out of which to make these advances? It may be that the Commonwealth Mortgage Bank will do so.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: You can make a good guess.

Mr. LESLIE: Another thing we would like to know is whether this authority has been arranged and, above all, what are the exact terms which will apply to the advance of that money. That is the crux of the soldier land settlement proposals. This agreement deals mainly with the acquisition of land and the conditions on which it will be made available to settlers. It merely says, "We can advance money." It then lays down the conditions on which the settler will pay rent or re-imburse or compensate the Government for the land; but it says nothing about how he is to repay the advances that are to be made to him in order to carry on the property. That is the vital part of land settlement. It was that additional finance which landed our soldier-settlers after the last war on the rocks

The Rural Reconstruction Commission was impressed by our submission and it recommended that all advances made should be

interest free for the first five years; during the next five years the interest should be two per cent., and thereafter at the current rate applicable to loans on farms made by the Commonwealth Mortgage Bank. The Commonwealth Government and the State Government have been commended during the course of this debate for adopting the recommendations of the Rural Reconstruction Commission as to land settlement. But they have not done so here, in the opinion of the Returned Soldiers' League. The point is vital. On it hinges mainly the success or failure of any land settlement scheme, but particularly ex-service land settlement schemes. This recommendation by the Rural Reconstruction Commission, it is very evident, pre-supposed that the Commonwealth would be the financing authority entirely, in accordance with the league's submission.

The Minister for Lands: Is the Commonwealth not now?

Mr. LESLIE: No.

The Minister for Lands: Who is?

Mr. LESLIE: Who is going to be the financial authority for the extra advances? It is to be an authority that meets with the approval of the Commonwealth, after consultation between the Commonwealth and the State. It might be the Rural Bank; it might be the Commonwealth Bank. As I say, it might be that the Commonwealth itself will provide the money.

The Minister for Lands: Surely it is apparent that the authority will be the agent of the Commonwealth. You should not have to send to Canberra for every cheque that you want.

Mr. LESLIE: I am not talking about the £1,000 cheque. The Commonwealth Bank does not send a cheque to Canberra every time a customer handles an account.

The Minister for Lands: You are a unificationist when it suits you.

Mr. LESLIE: No, nor am I a secessionist when it suits me. We have to look facts in the face.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: This is a horrible world!

Mr. LESLIE: Under the agreement by which the States have literally sold their birthright, the Commonwealth has control of the purse. We have to look to the Commonwealth to find the money. The Commonwealth might hand it to the States under conditions, but I am going on what the agreement says. The agreement provides

that the Commonwealth, in consultation with the State, will arrange with an authority in the State to make advances to settlers.

The Minister for Lands: After consulting with the State, the Commonwealth might arrange with the Commonwealth Bank to do it.

Mr. LESLIE: We do not know who the authority is.

The Minister for Lands: Does it matter as long as the soldier gets his money?

Mr. LESLIE: It matters a lot.

The Minister for Lands: Does it make any difference where the money comes from, as long as it is honest money?

Mr. LESLIE: I agree, but it does make a difference as to the accounts and the terms upon which the advances are made. Those particulars are not included in the agreement and, in my opinion, they should be. As to the losses that have been incurred in past soldier settlement schemes, I feel it is necessary to ask people not to deplore the extent of the losses which the State, or society, incurred as a result of those schemes. It was not only soldier settlement schemes that were responsible for those losses; there were numerous other land settlement schemes as well.

Mr. Watts: Or as bad!

Mr. LESLIE: Yes. One of the principles—and an entirely new one—introduced by this agreement is the remedying of an age-old injustice that existed when the old pioneer and the new settler were obliged to go out into virgin country and develop it entirely at their own cost. We are now to depart from that old practice and institute a new principle, whereby the State—that is, society—will make some recognition of the work of development. That responsibility will be the State's and society's. The State will undertake the initial development of its lands, after which it will place people on them who will start producing right away.

Unlike the pioneers, as we call them, those people will not carry all the burden. The soldier settlers, under the previous scheme, did carry that burden and it was a contributing factor to the financial losses that were incurred. But neither the Minister, nor anyone else, can assess the economic benefit to the nation which resulted from that development, done at so much cost to the individual and not to the nation. In dealing with that aspect, I would like to

point out that the R.S.L. in submitting evidence to the Rural Reconstruction Commission, dealing with the development and the setbacks, said—and it is well that people should be made aware of this evidence, so as to assess how near the report coincides with the evidence that was submitted—

Individual setbacks and cases of personal hardship have been undoubted, but we consider that the State and Australia have benefited considerably from the scheme, which absorbed many thousands of men from the Great War into a creative industry; revived many languishing districts, and new localities were opened up; the national wealth has increased as a result; the whole State, including local governing bodies and business houses, profited from the advances; millions of pounds came to the State from the sale of products abroad; too much praise cannot be accorded to the women-folk for the part they have played in any success claimed for soldier land settlement.

The regrettable feature about this is that it appears that, as compensation for the acceptance of a national responsibility by the Government, it is proposed to deprive the individual of a right that mankind has sought for centuries and that we in Australia—as has been mentioned tonight—have come to look upon as one of our greatest benefits, that is, personal ownership of land. The Minister, in introducing the Bill, mentioned that it was the Commonwealth's decision that this scheme would be on a leasehold basis. I do not know whether I have made a mistake, but somehow or other I have an idea that the Minister said that rather apologetically.

The Minister for Lands: I do not apologise for anything or anybody. I make no apology for the Commonwealth Government. It is big enough to apologise for itself.

Mr. LESLIE: The Minister might then have said it in a disappointed tone, although as I say, he did not seem to favour the freehold system. He was not as warm-hearted over the proposal as he was over the rest of the Bill.

The Minister for Lands: That is only fancy—wishful thinking.

Mr. LESLIE: It may be wishful thinking. I know that many people share my wishes. The Minister asked, how many farmers actually own their farms today? Of course, the answer would be, in the Minister's mind, that so many farmers are

so heavily indebted to financial institutions that they do not own their properties; but, at least, they have the promise of ownership.

The Minister for Lands: They will have the promise of ownership now—after 999 years!

Mr. LESLIE: And they have the opportunity of ownership which is denied to them by the present Bill. This Bill says that the land shall be held on the perpetual leasehold basis, without any opportunity to acquire ownership. I am not dealing with this matter from a political angle. I submit for the information of members, and as a reviver to the Minister's memory, that the R.S.L.'s recommendation in connection with soldier land settlement was—

All settlement shall in the first instance be based on leasehold; but the leaseholder shall possess the right at any time during the tenure of any lease to convert it to freehold, provided that in any action taken by the lessee to convert the property from leasehold to freehold, the terms under which such conversion is to be made shall be subject to approval by the prescribed authority.

Members could wish for nothing wider, more broad-minded or more generous than that to both sides.

The Minister for Lands: You do not call them leasehold, surely?

Mr. LESLIE: I call them leasehold when they are held on a promise of freehold; it is not perpetual leasehold, which is different.

The Minister for Lands: I give it up!

Mr. LESLIE: I hope the Minister gives it to the leaseholder, too. After the league had submitted its recommendations to the Rural Reconstruction Commission on leasehold and freehold, the Commission said that it deemed it advisable not to provoke any discussion on the subject of tenure. In other words, "Let the other fellow decide this momentous argument!" That would probably delay the scheme. The commission suggested that the scheme should proceed under the existing tenures. Why was that departed from? That was a disappointment to us. We wholeheartedly supported the recommendations in connection with soldier settlement submitted by the Rural Reconstruction Commission. I think here and there they departed from our suggestions, but in the main they agreed with ours and we supported the recommendations for the

simple reason that they allowed the existing order of things to continue. They desired no change and no departure, and we desire the same thing. If perpetual leasehold tenure were the policy in this State, and had been for many years, in connection with land settlement we would probably be prepared to carry on and abide by it, but why, when a new principle in some small degree and in another direction, is introduced, should ex-servicemen be deprived of a privilege available to everyone else?

A personal equity in any property is essential. Perpetual leasehold has its limitations. We have heard some of them discussed tonight. There is the limitation in connection with the disposal of structural improvements. A man cannot demand that he be recompensed fully for the cost of providing structural improvements if there is some restraint placed on his right to dispose of the land. Again, what repayment would be made to a perpetual leaseholder for the improvements he effected to the productive capacity of the farm if he were not able to dispose of it at will? There is another point that should be considered, and it is that financial assistance to a settler who is on a perpetual leasehold basis will be definitely limited in connection with the sources from which it might come. I have made inquiries from the Associated Banks as to whether they would be prepared to advance money, on a reasonable basis, against a property held on perpetual lease. They said, "Certainly not, because the property does not belong to the leaseholder."

Mr. J. Hegney: They are doing it now.

Mr. LESLIE: May be! A bank could certainly accept as security the improvements on a property, but as the Associated Banks said, it is a very unsatisfactory arrangement and that their advances would be limited to a negligible percentage of the actual value of the property to be pledged.

The Minister for Lands: That will keep the settler out of debt, anyhow.

Mr. LESLIE: Yes, but it may also have the effect of limiting him in his desire to extend his operations. What to me is a little more distasteful is that it will restrict him in the sources from which he can get advances. He will be able to get assistance only from this Government instrumentality or authority, and only under its terms and conditions. There are sev-

eral other aspects of the agreement to which I could make reference, but I do not wish to deal with them at this stage. I am going to support the Bill in the hope that as time goes on we will get the improvements that we seek. As an indication as to how far the hopes of old soldiers will be dashed to the ground when they find what are the actual provisions of this agreement, I mention that at the recent R.S.L. Conference held this year, it was suggested that soldiers under the old soldier settlement scheme were desirous of transferring to the new soldier settlement scheme, and of participating in its benefits because they understood it would be far ahead of the conditions they have endured.

Can you, Mr. Speaker, or any member here see any one of these old soldiers desiring to transfer a property, in which he has some equity, to a perpetual leasehold basis and under terms and conditions about which he knows nothing? I can hardly see a similar motion being carried, or even submitted at the next conference. Another point indicating how little we know of what is finally proposed in this Bill is that in one part of the measure we find that the rent payable under the lease may include an amount calculated at a rate to be agreed upon between the Commonwealth and the State in respect of the cost of the State administration of the scheme arising out of the allotment of the holding to the settler. I presume that at the time of the allotment of the holding the settler will be advised of the rent, which is based upon the economic production of the property—that is upon its productive capacity—and after that allotment has been made and he has been advised of the rent, it seems as though an additional charge is to be included in the rent in order to meet the cost of State administration. That is the first of the additional charges to which I am alluding.

Then of course there will be costs and other repayments to be made and the interest payments to be met on the advances which he has received and is receiving. I believe, and I urge, that it is necessary to make it clear to impending settlers what are the provisions of the scheme under which they will be working. At present there is an impression that a settler will be called upon make no payments for the first year or two years that he is on

the land. That is not clarified by saying that he will not be required to make any rental payments. That is actually what is set out but the relative clause of the Bill provides—

During the assistance period the settler shall not be required to pay any rent or interest in respect of the holding or to make any payments on account of principal or interest in respect of advances (other than advances for working capital) made under Clause 15 of this agreement.

What kind of advances are we going to have? Are we going to have them for this that and the other thing? Let us not forget that during this period he is receiving sustenance and assistance, and if he receives an advance of working capital he will be required to make repayments. I guarantee that if an intending settler were asked today what payments he expected to have to make in the first year or two years he would say, "None at all." But he will actually be called on to make some payments. There will be some measure of disappointment as a result. I would like the Minister, when replying, to define what is meant by "acquiring, developing and improving the land." Does that include the provision of stock and plant, or is this an additional charge altogether? Will a separate account be established for that, apart from working capital, or will it be included in working capital?

There is one feature of the whole of this soldier settlement scheme over which there will be great disappointment. That disappointment already exists, and it will extend. I refer to the fact that the scheme does not apply as widely as the ex-servicemen anticipated. This land settlement scheme is to work in conjunction with the rural reconstruction training scheme. The condition under which a person shall be deemed eligible and suitable for settlement on the land is that he must have a working knowledge of the type of agriculture or farming that he proposes to undertake. If he has not that knowledge one of two courses is open to him. In the first place he can drop the idea altogether and seek private finance; on the other hand he can make application for training as a suitable soldier settler. The Minister may be able to enlighten me as to whether the training scheme has a limitation.

In connection with all the other occupations this scheme excludes, generally, the person over 21 years of age. Does that mean that men over 21 years of age who cannot, because of the limitations of the training scheme, participate in that training are going to be excluded from participating in the war service land settlement scheme? That point is exercising the minds of many ex-servicemen today who are about 28 years old. Those men went away when they were about 22 and they are now desirous of going on the land, but they have no particular knowledge of the land. These men, on present indications, will be excluded from participating in the soldier land settlement scheme. They cannot come under the Re-establishment and Re-employment Act, which provides for an advance of £1,000 to assist men in going on to a farm, but that advance is definitely limited to those who were previously occupied in farming operations on their own account.

Mr. Cross: Are you reading from Job's Lamentations?

Mr. LESLIE: This pamphlet is issued by the Department of Post War Reconstruction and to call its Job's Lamentations is correct. The hon. member has found the right title. It states—

Many men and probably some women also, who have qualified for assistance through service during the war in the Armed Forces and their auxiliaries were farming on their own account or in partnership or as share farmers, before enlistment. The War Service Land Settlement scheme, it is likely, will not serve the needs of many of these people. Recognising this the Commonwealth Government has included in the Re-establishment and Employment Act, 1945, provision for the grant of agricultural re-establishment loans and re-establishment allowances under certain conditions to ex-service people who possess the necessary qualifications and are in need of financial assistance.

It later stresses—

While applications for agricultural re-establishment loans may be lodged at any time within five years of the end of the war, or of discharge or completion of reconstruction training, applications for re-establishment allowance must be made by those engaged in agricultural occupation on their own account, etc.

That means that if a soldier was not engaged in some agricultural pursuit on his own account before the war—not as a farm labourer—

Hon. J. C. Willcock: As a share farmer.

Mr. LESLIE: Yes. Share farmers are all right, but the ones to whom I was alluding just now are the comparatively young men of between 20 and 30 years of age who were working as labourers on their father's farm, and who may not be able to come up to the requirements of the board's examination. They may not be considered eligible for training or re-training under the scheme because of these considerations, which will mean that they will be out of soldier land settlement altogether.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: No!

Mr. LESLIE: That is what we are confronted with at present. Because the men were not working on their own farms prior to the war but were on their parents' properties, they will not be regarded as eligible for assistance in connection with the £1,000 grant. There is so much information that ex-members of the Armed Forces are seeking that the Bill does not in any way explain. In fact, this legislation creates more problems and provokes more inquiry.

The Minister for Lands: The £1,000 proposal does not affect this Bill at all.

Mr. LESLIE: I know that.

The Minister for Lands: Then what are you gassing about?

Mr. LESLIE: I am pointing out that many of the returned men will not be eligible under this Bill, but they should be able to take advantage of the £1,000 provision and soon. We do not know who will administer the measure.

The Minister for Lands: You are discussing a point that is not affected by this Bill.

Mr. LESLIE: It is part and parcel of the establishment of men on the land! I agree with the Minister regarding many of his statements.

The Minister for Lands: That is a bit better.

Mr. LESLIE: I do not blame the Minister for the failings in connection with this legislation. The officials of the Lands Department have gone as far as they can. I have personal knowledge in that respect, and I commend the Director of Soldier Settlement and his staff for having put their team on the ground, placed the ball in position, and having everything ready for someone to kick off.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: It has been kicked off.

The Minister for Lands: And some guernseys have been torn already!

Mr. LESLIE: I do not know that the ball has been kicked off at all. There are many questions and problems that the director and the Minister will have to put to higher authorities before they will be able to get anywhere. I shall support the Bill in the hope that as time goes on we shall be able to effect the necessary alterations required to improve the legislation. I am speaking now not as a member of the House but as a member of the Returned Soldiers' League when I say there are necessary and desirable alterations to the agreement that are essential if it is to be made satisfactory to ex-servicemen.

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne) [9.18]: I had not intended intervening in the debate, but I regard it as necessary that members should throw their minds back a few years, during the course of which there has been much publicity on this subject. If they were to do that, they would more readily provide for themselves answers to the many questions that have been asked in the Chamber tonight. It is hardly necessary for me to say that during 1942 and 1943 I took some part, in an Australia-wide sense, in an examination of this problem. Because of what was considered the urgent necessity to meet what was anticipated would be an early demand, together with three other persons, I made a contribution to the Commonwealth in the form of the second report of the Rural Reconstruction Commission, which was designed to answer many of the questions and to set forth many of the problems associated with land settlement for ex-servicemen.

That document, which was prepared by the Commission, represented a very great responsibility. In it was attempted not merely a review of the past in anticipation of the future, but a presentation of what we considered to be a very sound initiation of a future land settlement scheme for ex-servicemen. In the course of it were mentioned the suggestions made by the Returned Soldiers' League, the requests made by its members to the Commonwealth Government, and the Bill which the R.S.L. members proposed should be the basis for ex-servicemen. The

member for Mt. Marshall made mention of his support of the Bill submitted by the Returned Soldiers' League, and in the same breath that hon. member opposed almost every aspect of Commonwealth control envisaged in this agreement.

Mr. Leslie: No, I did not.

The PREMIER: It was a most inconsistent attitude, having in mind that it would have necessitated an amendment of the Constitution in order to put into effect the proposals the Returned Soldiers' League advanced.

Mr. Leslie: But I did not oppose it.

The PREMIER: Let us examine the history of the agreement under discussion. Early in 1944 the Commonwealth Government called a special conference to examine all the proposals emanating from the reports submitted to it, and upon which was based an attempt at an agreement which was to be submitted to the six States. It was quickly found that the States could not be on a basis of equality in connection with the common scheme. It was ascertained that circumstances obtaining in different States would necessitate differentiation in treatment as between the Commonwealth and the States because of the financial incapacity of three of the States to enable them, either of their own volition or for the Commonwealth, to handle an ambitious scheme of land settlement affecting ex-servicemen. It was obvious when one analysed the position and took guidance therefrom, that the financial requirements in connection with the scheme envisaged by this State were quite beyond the capacity of Western Australia. In addition, there was the very vital fundamental phase that the responsibility for repatriation and rehabilitation, whether on the land or in industry, is that of the Commonwealth Government.

The Minister for Lands: That is the point.

The PREMIER: That being so, the State's case was handled at the Premier's Conference by my predecessor in office, the member for Geraldton. There was no mistaking the attitude adopted by him and by the State's representatives in connection with the point as to with whom the responsibility lay. When the first agreement was submitted to the Premiers' Conference it was found to be unacceptable in many particulars. It was based on proposals which meant for the States which could not take upon themselves

the responsibility of land settlement, domination and control by the Commonwealth, and this was found by the representatives of the States concerned to be wholly unacceptable. It will be remembered that the conference broke down. In fact, I think it was stated at the time that the representative of Western Australia was to blame for its breakdown. Whether that was so or not, it can be confidently stated that at all stages of the proceedings whether at the officers' conference, or at the Premiers' Conference, or at the Ministers' Conference, the attitude of Western Australia was consistent in that it required a very searching examination to be made so that the functional responsibilities that were to be undertaken would be borne in a proper proportion by the Commonwealth.

At the same time, the State decided to be generous to the fullest extent within the limits of its functional capacity not only in connection with the scheme itself but in the interests of the returned men affected. Not only did it offer to accept responsibility in connection with the functional side of the administration of the scheme, but it agreed to share fully in the losses up to a certain point and in the costs up to a point as well. So the background of this agreement shows that not only has it reached the stage of the proposals outlined, but that it reached the stage where a very searching examination has progressed from the standpoint of representatives of this and other States. We reached the stage where the Commonwealth has submitted, more particularly at the officers' conference held in February last, this document for acceptance by this State.

It was not a very easy matter for an agreement to have reached this stage. There are included in the agreement very many matters involving technicalities respecting which the authorities, like lawyers, sharply disagreed but which, in a general sense, are matters of principle even though debatable which, within such a scheme, are quite acceptable and possibly of implementation and control. Very many of the points raised in the original agreement are now entirely excluded. Many aspects which placed upon the States unfair impositions do not appear therein. In general the terms of the agreement are acceptable to the three States that have the responsibility of acting as agents for the Common-

wealth in their endeavour to do their utmost to facilitate and ensure the success of the settlement on the land of ex-servicemen.

On the point of the original breakdown of the Commonwealth conference, there was a sharp difference of opinion in connection with the allocation of a fair share of the responsibility, the question of freehold versus leasehold tenure and certain aspects of Commonwealth control. The Leader of the Opposition, in the course of his remarks, said that the House had not heard from the Minister one word respecting the build-up of the agreement. He also said that he hoped his remarks would arouse the Minister from his lethargy. Those two assertions by the hon. member were what brought me to my feet this evening because they were quite unfair. Although the Leader of the Opposition does not usually adopt such an attitude, I believe that because he wished to elicit information within the House he made those comments. The hon. member knows that great care has been taken to give the fullest publicity, in fairness to the Commonwealth and the State Governments alike and to the returned men themselves, as and when such opportunities to furnish information became available. Following all of the Premiers' Conferences, statements have been made on the points which were discussed.

Mr. Watts: Why was not the information given in this House last week?

The PREMIER: In two debates on motions to my knowledge, in one of which I took a prominent part, the fullest details were given as to the progress made and the anticipations that were ours at that stage, and since the officers' conference in February last, prior to which the Director of Land Settlement was appointed by me when I was Minister for Lands, the Director has attended many meetings. He gave an explicit statement of the 17 points in the agreement and the explanation of those points was at that stage widely publicised.

Mr. Watts: Did the Minister do what I said was not done last week?

The PREMIER: In connection with that statement, 1,400 circulars were sent to ex-servicemen and ex-servicemen responded to the extent of making applications and filling in questionnaire forms so that their cases could be considered. In the statements given to the Press, there has been an earnest

endeavour to cover the points raised in debate this evening. I have good reason to believe that, at one meeting at least convened and held by the Director of Land Settlement, the Leader of the Opposition was in attendance and heard an explanation of the points raised this evening.

Mr. Watts: Of course, but the House is entitled to have that explanation from the Minister.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: It has been published all over the country.

The PREMIER: It has been given the widest publicity. The history of this agreement is a history of difficult negotiations on a difficult problem. I know the Leader of the Opposition will concede that point. The member for Geraldton had more than two conferences in an endeavour to get down to fundamentals which were to be incorporated when the first agreement was almost scrapped. So, although it is quite valid that the Leader of the Opposition should seek the fullest information during the debate, it is quite an unnecessary review that has emanated from some speakers in an endeavour to get information that has been so widely publicised.

Mr. Watts: I shall have to make another speech now.

The PREMIER: The hon. member may make ten speeches if he likes. I am very relieved that the reception accorded to this Bill has been so favourable, but I am sure members do not appreciate the difficulties associated with the technical problems that have been reduced to words in the agreement to cover difficult points. They have meant hours of study, considerable concentration and much argument in an endeavour to protect, firstly, the interests of the ex-servicemen who are to be settled on the land and, secondly, the interests of the State.

Let us examine the points that have been raised. One question was: Who shall constitute an eligible person? This point has been raised by more than one speaker, as has also the point that "members of the Forces" has a meaning similar to that in Section 4 of the Commonwealth Re-establishment and Employment Act, 1945. That

section clearly sets out who "members of the Forces" may be. It reads—

"Members of the Forces" means—

- (a) a person who is or was, during the war, a member of the Permanent Forces, other than the Australian Imperial Force;
- (b) a person who is or was, during the war, a member of the Australian Imperial Force;
- (c) a member of the Citizens Forces who is or was enlisted, appointed or called up for continuous service for the duration of, and directly in connection with, the war;
- (d) a person who is or was, during the war, engaged on continuous full-time service as a member of any of the following Services:—
 - The Royal Australian Naval Nursing Service;
 - The Women's Royal Australian Naval Service;
 - The Australian Army Nursing Service;
 - The Australian Women's Army Service;
 - The Australian Army Medical Women's Service;
 - The Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service;
 - The Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force;

- (e) a member of a Voluntary Air Detachment who is or was, during the war, engaged on continuous full-time paid duty with any part of the Defence Force;
- (f) a member of the Naval, Military or Air Forces of any part of the King's dominions other than Australia, who is or was, during the war, engaged on service in a prescribed area and was born in Australia or was, immediately prior to his becoming a member of any of those Forces, domiciled in Australia; and
- (g) a person who is or was, during the war, engaged on continuous full-time service with any Nursing Service or other Women's Service auxiliary to the Naval, Military or Air Forces of any part of the King's dominions other than Australia who was born in Australia or was immediately prior to her becoming a member of that Service, domiciled in Australia,

but does not include any enemy alien who served during the war as a member of the Army Labour Corps but not otherwise.

The Imperial Service is to be covered by agreement between the Commonwealth and the Imperial Government. It is provided for in Clause 2 (1) (b) of the agreement. Those people, it is confidently anticipated, will be favourably regarded when the

agreement is reached. Negotiations are now proceeding, and I am given to believe on very good authority that no difficulty is anticipated in reaching an agreement on that point. It is at present the subject of consideration. The member for Pingelly raised a point in regard to Clause 3 (a) of the agreement. He asked—

Who is to say where economic prospects for the production concerned are reasonably sound?

The Commonwealth has authorities in the Department of Commerce continuously investigating at home and abroad prospects for Australia's produce in international markets. A watch is constantly being kept on the prospects of expansion within Australia. Its authorities are investigating prospects for expansion and/or the need for contraction in any of our important industries. These measures are being taken in an Australian sense and in an international sense. I feel confident that associated with this agreement is a keen desire for the success of the ex-servicemen and to overcome every difficulty associated with the marketing of our produce, irrespective of its nature or where it is produced. I assure the hon. member that this matter has been discussed at very great length to make certain that an examination of the economic prospects of any commodity will be reasonably sound.

The next point mentioned was by the Leader of the Opposition dealing with the question of a reasonable labour income. The meaning of "a reasonable labour income" is that the person would be expected to receive a reasonable return for his labour that would be comparable with the return he would get if he were a wages person. If we take the measure required in the business of farming, it could be reasonably defined as what should be the return of a reasonable labour income to the farmer. The Leader of the Opposition also raised the question of adequate guidance. By agreement between the Commonwealth and the States, it is understood that the Public Services of the States, whether it be the Departments of Agriculture, Public Works, Forests or any others which could collaborate and co-operate one with the other or with Commonwealth authority or direct with the farmer, shall give guidance and the resources of the States that come within

that compass shall be made available to these settlers. That is part of the responsibility of the State. The services of the extension officers of the Department of Agriculture or any other department will be readily available not only to the controlling authority but also direct to the farmer himself. It is intended that it shall be, as it is today with all other settlers, in a friendly way so that adequate guidance can mean the best that any State department can give the settlers.

The Leader of the Opposition raised the question of the Commonwealth's initiating proposals where these are directly associated with any matter in respect of which the Commonwealth has power to make laws. Suppose in the district of Kimberley or in any other district it is necessary for the Commonwealth to acquire or take control of an area for defence purposes, that area shall be within the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth and it will be competent for the Commonwealth to initiate proposals in that area.

A question was raised by the member for Pingelly about the subdivision, development and improvement of land within a reasonable time. That provision was included particularly to deal with conditions obtaining in this State. If prospects are sound in districts costly of development, it shall not be a rushed process to clear green timber of all sorts, but it shall be a process in which the labour and material available shall be utilised with the greatest care so that there shall be no over-burden of debt to be shared as a loss by the State and so that, within reasonable time, the land might be satisfactorily developed to a stage where there will be an income for the prospective settler.

The member for Pingelly raised a question about Clause 15 of the agreement. He asked why the Commonwealth, in consultation with the States, should arrange with an authority to make advances to settlers. That of necessity must be a provision of such an agreement to which three States are parties. In the State of South Australia it might be decided that the Savings Bank of South Australia shall be the financing authority. In Western Australia it may be that the mortgage section of the Commonwealth Bank or the Rural and Industries Bank will be the financing authority. So that by agreement, in consulta-

tion between Commonwealth and States, that matter will be decided; and I understand that the latest information we have is that it has not yet been decided between all the States. It is the subject of negotiations at present.

On the question of option to purchase; I was very interested in the points of view expressed by members opposite, which showed that the merits and particular virtues of a freehold system have no special attraction for some of them. Members will recall that the recommendations of the Commission which reported to the Commonwealth on this subject were for a freehold tenure based on the principle of giving the soldier at least a 30 per cent. equity by charging him no interest for the first five years and half interest for the second five years; and, if that could not be done, the Commonwealth, which believes in the principle of perpetual leases, has agreed and insists that in the States where it is the principle in regard to finance, leasehold tenure shall obtain.

I think we would be wise at this stage, in the light of the anticipated experiences that must follow, if we did not attempt to alter the agreement in this particular. But I think that in a few years' time, with the experience that will come to them, with the prospect of measuring much better the merits and demerits and the benefits, if benefits come, to the returned soldier from it and the opportunity for him to convert if he so desires, that course will be followed. But even at that stage I think it will be found that it may be prejudicial to him, even if he is able to pay off the whole capital sum necessary, to freehold the property rather than pay a rental which is not a subject for reappraisal. That is a very important point; and, whatever may be the basic rental arrived at when the valuation takes place, that rental is not to be a subject for reappraisal.

Mr. Watts: Not downward?

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. Watts: It might be hard on them, then.

The PREMIER: Yes; but if we consider all the precautions that will be taken at the time of the soldier's taking over, I think we shall have very little to fear in that regard.

Mr. Berry: You will have fixed prices.

The PREMIER: This is not the law of the Medes and Persians. I think there will be ample opportunity, if any hardship is incurred, for this agreement to be reviewed if it is found to be irksome or burdensome in any particular in that way. As the member for Mt. Marshall said, this is an agreement designed to give to returned men an opportunity, and to the States a responsibility which they gladly accept; and the Commonwealth is to take the major burden. And until we see how it works out in all these interwoven particulars, we should be satisfied to know that the proposal has had the intense scrutiny of authoritative people for a long period.

The last point raised by the Leader of the Opposition was on the question of recompense for returned men for improvements in soil fertility due to better farming. The answer, I would presume, would be the logical answer: the responsibility accepted by the controlling authority, which in our case would be the Director of Land Settlement, advised by an expert committee, would ensure that he would get every advantage. If it came to the point of a sale or transfer of the lease, he would get every benefit that might accrue because of good farming and improvement in the value of the property.

Mr. Watts: It has not been the custom in the past in this country.

The PREMIER: No; but that is the accepted principle that was the subject of debate when the clause was designed. On the other point which the Leader of the Opposition referred to in connection with rabbit netting and the like, that would have to be a matter of balance between what would be reasonably expected to be the normal requirements, again based on expert advice. I have no fears in that regard, and I feel confident that should the position arise it would be analysed on an expert basis. The member for Pingelly raised a point with regard to the last page of the agreement in connection with the transferable nature of a lease. That is a very reasonable proposal. Surely it is necessary to protect ex-servicemen from the agent and speculator, who would take a hand if, without consultation and without approval, transfers were made easy.

Mr. Mann: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: It is very necessary to protect servicemen and also the State's interests; but there should be no tendency whatever to create inflationary activities because of the practice of indiscriminate transfer of leases. After all, this scheme is for the rehabilitation of ex-servicemen and they are entitled to every protection against exploitation, as also are their successors on the same property.

Mr. J. Hegney: In the event of the death of a soldier settler, do his rights pass to his dependants?

The PREMIER: That would have to be dealt with on its merits.

Mr. Mann: It has been so in the past.

The PREMIER: I feel sure that though it is not reduced to definiteness in words, that is the tendency, and the disposition, and the desire, and the intention of those who will be in control of the scheme. It is not possible to reduce to words all the provisions necessary to deal with the various cases that will occur through the years. In making that explanation of the agreement—which I thought might come at the Committee stage initially—as did my colleague—I have simply endeavoured to explain clearly the background of the agreement and to assure the House that there have been tremendous difficulties associated with its reaching this State. I feel sure that if we let the matter rest as it is, as an attempt to face frankly the difficulties we can anticipate, then those we cannot anticipate can be dealt with as they arise.

MR. CROSS (Canning) [9.56]: The objective of the Bill—soldier settlement—will play an important part in the economy of this State in the next few years and the two most important factors are the personal equation and suitable land. It is probable that the personal equation will be the most important factor. I think it is of paramount importance that the men chosen to take part in this scheme should be fitted for the job, not only with knowledge but in every other way; because there is no doubt that the failures of past land settlement schemes have mainly been due to those two causes—unsuitable men and unsuitable land. Therefore, later on, when some kind of board is set up to choose the men concerned, that board should include men with first-class agricultural knowledge

and men versed in soil technology, together with other men capable of selecting the right type of settler.

If we get the right type of soil in addition I think the scheme will be a success. The question of suitable land is important. I have had a look at the map. I have been through some of that territory; and there is quite a lot of good land though there is a lot of sandplain too. I was reminded of that when the member for Toodyay was speaking. I interjected that in his electorate there were too many "Nickoviches." It is commonly known that even during the war period quite a lot of transfers took place to people who were not naturalised or through dummies. I dare say the member for Toodyay knows as well as I do that quite a portion of the Upper Swan land contains some of the best soil in the State. Yet it is inhabited mostly by Southern Europeans. I do not know why some of that land should not be resumed and returned soldiers put on it; because I believe that only the best is good enough for returned soldiers, and those that went to defend the country should have the right to some of the picked parts of it.

When we start to settle them on the land, consideration should be given to establishing them in groups in various industries. For instance, in the Upper Swan there is no reason why we should not settle 100 in a group and let them go in for viticulture, especially when one realises the quantity of wine we import from the Eastern States. In the 12 months ended the 30th June, 1939, we imported from the Eastern States £79,000 worth of wine. For the 12 months ended the 30th June, 1944, when conditions of transport were extremely difficult, we were able to import from the Eastern States, £110,000 more, importing a total of over £189,000 worth; so we would not have to look far for a market in that connection. That land is very suitable for viticulture.

Mr. J. Hegney: It is all tied up.

Mr. CROSS: Not all of it. At any rate, we could attend to that side of the question.

Mr. J. Hegney: No; we have not the power.

Mr. CROSS: In other areas not suitable for viticulture we could set up a colony of 100 men in the pig-raising industry. There is a market for that. In pre-war

years Great Britain imported tens of millions of pounds' worth of pig meat from the Continent. I remember that a few months ago some people came from Canada, and I was talking to one of them who was a millionaire and who had started from nothing in Canada in the pig industry. He was exporting enormous quantities of pig meat to Great Britain, and he informed me he was able to sell to the British Government whole shipments on the declaration of war. If Canada can raise pigs when for six months of the year it has to provide cover for them from the weather, we, who can raise them in the open, should be able to compete with that country and with European countries also. That is an industry from which this State could gain considerable revenue and there is no reason why ex-soldiers should not take part in it. I long ago thought that wool and wheat production alone were not sufficient.

Two or three years ago I made inquiries as to the possibility of growing soya beans in Western Australia, but was informed by the Department of Agriculture that tests had not been made. That bean is one of the most remarkable plants in the world and from it about 120 or 130 different articles can be made. It can be used in the production of powder, paint, soap, milk and many scores of other things. It has never been grown in this State on any large scale to my knowledge, and experiments have never been made here with it. If it were found that our land was suitable for its growth returned soldiers could be settled on the land to grow it. Such men could be given the benefit if settled in groups, of collective machinery, and when, in the early years, the experts went round, they could advise them, getting the group together and supplying information so that the men would have a better chance of being successful in their undertaking. This Bill is most important as it will play a considerable part in the future economy of this State. I have gone through it carefully and in spite of the limitations seen by some members of the Opposition, who apparently can never see any good in anything, I think it can hardly be faulted at this stage. I compliment those who have taken part in drafting the agreements, which seem to me to give our returned men a fair chance of making a success of their life on the land.

MR. PERKINS (York) [10.5]: I think the Premier has been well advised to make the statement he has made, in order to allay the misgivings not only of members of this House, but of people outside, who have been uncertain as to the exact scope of the agreement with the Commonwealth Government. Some of the misgivings may have been due to misapprehension, but some of the matter on which the Premier has just spoken has not been entirely clear until now. He has qualified this agreement in a number of important particulars. The agreement, as it stands, evidently does not entirely meet the wishes of the State Government, and I gather, from what the Minister said, it is possible that some attempt may be made—before the scheme has been operating for very long—to secure some amendments to it. There is a lot of misgiving among members of the Forces, and only this morning I received a letter from one serviceman who has apparently applied to come under the scheme. I know this man well. He was a member of a partnership farming venture before the war, and has good experience. He writes—

I would like to know if you would be good enough to give me your opinion of the ex-serviceman's land settlement scheme. I have been following the matter for some time, and I am not at all keen about it, especially the clause on perpetual leasehold. I feel that, without the hope of eventual ownership, the farmer has little to work for.

He then goes on to speak about the locality in which he hopes to start farming. His letter continues—

I went before the Selection Committee in October and they classed me as suitable for farming after eight months' training. They then asked if I would get a job while waiting. I will if I can. This raises another point. Would you be kind enough to give me a reference which may help me to obtain employment? If I got a suitable job I would stick to it.

The outlook of that man is obvious. He is keen to get on the land under the settlement scheme but, due to the provisions of the agreement, he would rather take employment than go on the land under the perpetual leasehold condition. From what the Premier says, the fears of a man such as this can be considerably allayed. Apparently it is possible that legislation may be introduced at a later stage to vary this agreement, in order to give men who desire to do so, the opportunity to transfer from a perpetual lease to

a freehold basis. I think such a clause is very desirable. In one of the later clauses of the agreement, it is provided that in the event of the lease being terminated in pursuance of the conditions of the lease, the Commonwealth shall pay to the settler compensation for any improvements effected by him which are essential for the working of the property, after allowing for any amount owing to the Crown for the credit authority. That covers the position only up to a point. Any of us who have had practical experience of farming knows that there are many improvements that a farmer places on a property and of which it is difficult for any outside party to assess the value.

In the event of a settler giving up the property and the improvements being reassessed by the valuator appointed for the purpose by the Government, the settler could feel aggrieved at the valuation received. If a man starts on a property that is only slightly developed, hoping to bring it into full production and make a home for himself and his children, he may make various improvements which, while they do not have a direct effect on the productivity of the land, make the farm a real home. One such improvement is the planting of trees and gardens round the home, and it is questionable whether any two valuers would attach the same value to such improvements on a property. Under the freehold land tenure conditions a settler does not have to rely on the opinion of any one valuator. He is entitled to sell the property and to offer it on the open market, and has therefore the full scope of the opinions of all those interested in acquiring property of that type to value the improvements for him.

Mr. Watts: And he has the right to refuse the highest bidder.

Mr. PERKINS: Yes, he has that right. At any rate it is almost certain that amongst all the people interested in acquiring a property, there will be some who will adopt an outlook similar to that to which I have referred as indicative of the individual concerned. On the other hand, from the standpoint of any arbitrary valuation, there is grave fear that injustice may be done to particular individuals. That is the main reason causing ex-servicemen like the individual I have referred to as well as others with whom I have discussed the position, to adopt their present attitude. If we so hedge

any leasehold system with restrictions and safeguards to enable a settler to be absolutely safeguarded with respect to the improvements, we will do away with most of the essential differences between the freehold and leasehold systems of land tenure.

I submit that it is no accident that most of the land in Australia has been developed under freehold tenure conditions. Probably the Premier thinks as I do on this particular question. Whether he does or does not, it is a point to which the State Government should give careful consideration and should continue to place before the Commonwealth authorities. I am convinced it will have a very material bearing upon the interest the soldier settler will take in the development of his property. In any event, although many of us will agree that leasehold conditions may be desirable as a safeguard for the State and for the settler himself in the first few years during which the settler is becoming established on his property, I think we are entitled to ask why this experiment regarding land tenure should be carried out at the expense of soldier settlers rather than of other sections of the community.

The Premier: That question has been asked.

Mr. PERKINS: Undoubtedly it is an experiment. Throughout Australia the freehold system of land tenure has been the more popular, and now we are to have a soldier land settlement scheme it is based on the leasehold system! The question I put as to why such an experiment should be carried out in connection with returned soldiers is most pertinent and requires an answer. I make an exception, of course, during the first years of the scheme because of the necessity to safeguard the interests of the soldier settler himself and the State in view of possible losses that may be incurred. Even so I am bound to ask why such a social experiment should be carried out at the expense of ex-servicemen. One would almost be tempted to compare the situation with that of research workers conducting experiments on guinea-pigs. Why should ex-servicemen be made guinea-pigs of in order to carry out this experiment in connection with land tenure? I believe in the freehold system and I would like the soldier settler to have the option, when he becomes estab-

lished, of transferring to the freehold system of land tenure should be so desire. I agree with the member for Toodyay that it is essential quickly to get some scheme functioning because we are losing valuable time and many would-be soldier settlers are becoming impatient, seeing that they are wasting their time in dead-end jobs while the land settlement scheme is in course of preparation. In the meantime we are right in going on with this scheme, although in some respects it is not entirely to the liking of ex-servicemen.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [10.15]: The provisions of the Bill have been fully traversed and I do not propose to add much to the debate. We have no option but to pass the Bill. The Commonwealth Parliament has authorised the Commonwealth Government to sign an agreement substantially in the form presented in the measure. We therefore have to pass the agreement substantially in the form contained in the Bill or the whole matter will be abeyance until the Commonwealth Parliament meets again some months hence. We cannot contemplate further delay in connection with soldier settlement matters such as would be involved by a substantial amendment to the Bill in a direction we might consider desirable, and then having to wait until the Commonwealth Parliament met again to deal with the matter. The agreement is one to which we might individually be able to take some exception, but I can well appreciate what the Premier has said, namely, that it has been a matter of no small difficulty to arrive at an agreement acceptable to the Commonwealth and to the different States concerned.

Although there are elements in the agreement that are open to criticism—there are many difficulties that can be perceived by even a cursory reading of its provisions, which difficulties will be apparent in actual experience—nevertheless the agreement contains nothing that would justify the House in refusing to pass the Bill. There are one or two aspects to which I shall refer. I understand from the remarks of the Premier when dealing with the class of eligible persons as described in the second paragraph of the agreement, that it is contemplated that they will include people who have served in the Imperial Forces. With that

I believe we are all in full accord, but I am not prepared to allow the Bill to pass without a distinct protest against legislation in this form. The agreement says that it contains proposals agreed upon for the settlement on the land of discharged members of the Forces and other eligible persons. The Bill might equally have been described as a measure for the purpose of settlement of certain people on the land—including returned soldiers.

As I read the Bill, there is no limit to the people who may be settled on the land provided the executives of the Commonwealth and State agree upon the additional class being regarded as eligible persons. If Professor Elkins is right and we should admit a quota of Chinese to this country, should the Commonwealth and the States agree under the provisions of this legislation the Chinese could be proclaimed as eligible people for the purposes of this legislation.

I am not suggesting that the far-fetched illustration is at all likely to be realised in practice, but I do say that if, under any Bill which most correctly in the case of returned soldiers provides for land settlement on what I believe are very generous terms, the benefits can be extended by the Executives of the Commonwealth and State without Parliamentary sanction to include all persons whom they happen to agree upon, it would be a procedure taking from Parliament a power that should remain under the control of Parliament. This is a principle that I consider is highly objectionable. At the same time, it is one for which I place no blame on the State Government, because it has had to accept the Bill containing the provision in the form passed by the Commonwealth, but I hope that no other Bill will ever come before us containing a provision that passes over from our power matters that should essentially remain within the power of this legislature.

Another point I wish to refer to and on which the Premier anticipated me is that I think we should regard this agreement as the best that could have been reached in the limited time and in view of the expedition necessary to get some scheme operating, but it should be regarded as an agreement that must and should be revised in the light of experience.

The Premier: Hear, hear!

The Minister for Lands: There is no doubt about that.

Mr. McDONALD: I am glad that this debate has taken place, firstly, because the importance of the subject demands that members should express their views and, secondly, because it permits of placing on record the opinions of various members which may be of assistance in due course when the time may come to submit to the Commonwealth the necessity for a variation of the agreement in certain respects. As one who, theoretically at all events, is a believer in the single tax or perpetual lease and believes that the ownership of the land should never have been parted with by the people, I am not going to condemn the principle of leasehold that has been included in the Bill. At the same time, with the member for York, I have some regret that it should have been applied to the returned soldiers.

The Minister for Lands: Ninety-four per cent. of the Queensland settlement is leasehold.

Mr. McDONALD: I believe in the principle of public ownership of land, but the leasehold system is not in accordance with the most recent ideas on the subject. The idea of those who hold single tax views nowadays—I do not intend to deliver a homily on the subject—is to allow the freehold to remain with the private individual but, by means of taxation, to take back for the public revenue and the people, whatever may be the proper ground rent of the land. That system would avoid all the many complications which obviously will be experienced in the administration of the 999 years' lease, complications regarding improvements and complications in a hundred and one other directions. Therefore I am sorry in one respect that the method of leasehold which the Commonwealth Government has decided to require under this scheme should not have been based upon more recent views on the subject of ground rents.

The last aspect I wish to refer to is this: I believe there are certain classes of people who are not adequately covered by the provision now made for returned men. This matter has been touched on by other speakers including the member for Mt. Marshall. By way of illustration, take a boy who had worked on his father's farm and now desires

to settle in the same district! He is one for whom I believe no satisfactory provision has yet been made. Still, it is a case where it is eminently desirable that, if the father is settled on a farm and the boy has worked on the farm in that district, the boy, if possible, should be settled in the same district where he could receive not only the advice of his father, but also no doubt many kinds of assistance with machinery and equipment that otherwise he might not so easily get, in addition to which he would be commencing his farming life in an area of which he already had experience.

I hope that with the passing of time and the acquiring of experience, those who are not adequately covered by existing schemes may be provided for because the system must, at the outset, have certain weaknesses and certain gaps. As this Bill represents a start under conditions that I hope will prove infinitely more satisfactory than our experience after the 1914-18 war, our main objective is to see the measure passed at the earliest possible date and the fullest opportunity given to returned men to enter upon their new careers under the terms of settlement which are proposed and which I think will afford them opportunities for the success that we know they deserve.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Execution of agreement authorised:

Mr. SEWARD: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of paragraph (b) of Sub-clause (1) of Clause 2 of the schedule after the word "persons" the words "which class was formed for the better prosecution of the war" be inserted.

The amendment would simply take in the Civil Construction Corps or the groups of war people who are not provided for in the definition.

The Minister for Lands: Is that all you want to do?

Mr. SEWARD: Yes.

The Minister for Lands: But is not subparagraph (b) definite as it stands now?

Mr. SEWARD: It has been stated that that means a unionist.

The Minister for Lands: A unionist?

Mr. SEWARD: I know that that is not the intention of the State Government; but that is what has been pointed out to me, and consequently I am stipulating that the class of persons should be a class formed for the prosecution of the war.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I cannot understand how the amendment will better the paragraph in any way. The member for Pingelly mentioned the Civil Construction Corps, but 95 per cent. of those men were unionists. The majority were taken out of the mines. Surely the provision is plain enough as it stands. It seems to me that it is wide enough to include anybody who was associated in any way with war work.

Mr. Watts: Or was not.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No. There are scores of men and women who were engaged upon war work and who were so tied up to it that they could not get away from it.

Mr. WATTS: As the clause stands, there is no limit whatever. As the member for West Perth said, it is a Bill for eligible persons, including returned soldiers. That is what the provision means now. It defines an eligible person as being a discharged member of the Forces or a person included in a class of persons which the Commonwealth, with the concurrence of the States, determines shall be eligible. A class of persons may be a section of civilians who have reached the age of 30 years before the 29th May, 1945. The provision is badly worded, if it is intended to limit it to those who have had something to do with the war. I hope the Minister will reconsider his point of view. If he is not prepared to do so immediately, as the hour is getting fairly late, he might report progress and get further advice as to the actual technical meaning of the provision.

The PREMIER: A scrutiny of the long Title of the Bill shows that it is an Act to authorise the execution by or on behalf of the State of an agreement between the Commonwealth and the States in relation to War Service Land Settlement. The Bill and the attached agreement are designed to meet the requirements of those people who have been associated with the war and who therefore are eligible for consideration

under a war service land settlement scheme. My interpretation of the meaning of the paragraph in question is that it enables any persons who do not come within the designation in the Re-establishment and Employment Act also to be included by agreement between, maybe, the Imperial Government or the Commonwealth Government, after which the concurrence of the State would be necessary. It will be found on page 3 of the Bill that war service has the same meaning as in paragraphs (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) of the definition of "War Service" in Section 4 of the Re-establishment and Employment Act. Since the whole of the Bill refers to war service it would be quite outside its scope to introduce any sentiment which was not associated with war service by the participants in this scheme. I think it is quite unnecessary to anticipate that there is likely to be any variation from that principle. But I think that, as is the case with ex-Imperial servicemen, it may be that merchant seamen, by agreement between the Imperial Government and the Commonwealth Government or between the Commonwealth and the States—men who rendered heroic service during the war period—might request to be included in such schemes. I think that is the reason the clause is worded as it is.

Mr. DONEY: I would have liked to be assured that what the Premier has said is the actual interpretation we should put upon this; but I still have my fears. I think there is some additional meaning to that covered by the Premier's explanation. That is of very material consequence, and the matter should be cleared up. By the tenor of his remarks, the Minister for Lands demonstrated that he did not quite understand the clause; and, being unable to understand it, he was not capable of explaining it. It is plain that this is not restricted to members of the Forces as it should be. It refers to discharged members of the Forces, and other eligible persons who obviously have not been connected in any way with the Forces. Precisely who are they? Apparently neither the Minister for Lands nor the Premier is able to explain. We should report progress, and in the meantime have an explanation secured and presented to the Committee tomorrow.

The Minister for Lands: Where from?

Mr. DONEY: That is for the Minister in charge to determine. But there should be information available somewhere to cover the point in dispute.

The PREMIER: One would need to be possessed of second sight—

Mr. Doney: That may be so; I do not know.

The PREMIER: The hon. member cannot attribute second sight to me. He may assume that himself, when he says we must accept responsibility for the wording of the clause, because we must understand all the types of persons likely to be included in it. That cannot be. From the negotiations and consultations now taking place with regard to ex-Imperial men, it is plain we do not know the type that would be included. The amendment of the member for Pingelly does not in any way affect the clause prejudicially; and since, in my view, this measure is designed for those people who have given war service, it may be that there would be no objection to his amendment but I would rather that my colleague gave the hon. member an assurance that we will have scrutinised the full import of the proposal and be prepared to have the clause tied so that it can only apply to men associated with war service if it be necessary so to specify. It could then be arranged for the provision to be inserted in another place. The matter should be scrutinised so that it will not limit certain phases in contemplation by the Commonwealth.

Mr. BERRY: The suggestion of the Premier is sound. The Title refers to war service land settlement. At the same time people who made munitions and people who worked at the bacon factory at Fremantle all performed war service, and they would be eligible through that war service for inclusion in the scheme. Having dealt with the true serviceman, it would not be a bad idea if this country took a few more people, expanding the scheme to include war workers such as munition workers who want land and are suitable to go on the land. Why not let them come in? This is an agricultural country, and we are looking for its development. I do not mind who comes into the scheme to open up the country.

Mr. SEWARD: The Premier has pointed out that the Bill refers to war service land settlement, but Clause 17 provides that wherever it appears that land held by the

State for the purpose of the agreement is no longer required for that purpose it may be disposed of or dealt with in such manner as the Commonwealth and the State may agree upon. Obviously it can go outside those with war service.

The Premier: That is intended in later years when there is no prospect of ex-servicemen taking over properties.

Mr. SEWARD: There is reference to five years from the 15th August, 1945. At that time the scheme may be extended. The present Government might not be in power. With all due respect to the Premier, I think it is only making security doubly secure to insert the addition that the class of persons eligible must be some class associated with the promotion of the war effort.

The Minister for Lands: If there is any doubt we will straighten it out for you.

Mr. WATTS: The Premier seemed to be under the impression that there was some intention under this amendment to exclude such men as members of the merchant service.

The Minister for Lands: To include them!

Mr. WATTS: I thought the Premier feared the amendment would exclude them.

The Premier: No, I think the clause is designed to include them.

Mr. WATTS: Heaven forbid that we should exclude them, for I do not suppose there was a nastier form of war work than that undertaken by the merchant service.

The Minister for Lands: Under this clause they could be brought in.

Mr. WATTS: Yes, and so they could be under the amendment of the member for Pingelly. But under his amendment a pure civilian who was not in an occupation connected with the war could not be included. Under this clause I am convinced he could. I cannot see why it is in the Bill unless it was intended it should be there, or unless it is a result of a complete misapprehension on the part of the authorities. The Premier suggested the matter should be attended to in another place. If this were five o'clock in the afternoon, I would say that was a reasonable suggestion and we could debate the rest of the Bill; but as it is ten minutes to eleven, I think it would be a fair thing for the Minister to obtain the advice of his Solicitor General tomorrow.

row morning and allow this House to pass the measure, knowing what it is passing—which I do not know at this juncture. I submit in good faith to the Premier that the lapse of ten minutes will not hurt the passage of the Bill.

Mr. BERRY: Is this clause to include people who were prevented from going to this war because they were essential workers in a war industry? Such people should be entitled to a say in the terms of the agreement. In addition the Commonwealth Government is going to pay two-thirds of the cost to settle people in Western Australia, and this Government is going to be asked to pay only one-third.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	14
Noes	21

Majority against .. 7

AYES.

Mr. Abbott
Mr. Brand
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver
Mr. Hill
Mr. Leslie
Mr. Mann
Mr. McDonald

Mr. Owen
Mr. Perkins
Mr. Seward
Mr. Thorn
Mr. Watts
Mr. Willmott
Mr. Doney

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Berry
Mr. Cross
Mr. Fox
Mr. Hawke
Mr. J. Hegney
Mr. W. Hegney
Mr. Holman
Mr. Leahy
Mr. Marshall
Mr. Needham
Mr. Nulsen

Mr. Panton
Mr. Read
Mr. Smith
Mr. Styanth
Mr. Telfer
Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Triat
Mr. Wise
Mr. Withers
Mr. Wilson

(Teller.)

PAIR.

AYE.		NO.
Mr. Keenan		Mr. Collier

Amendment thus negatived.

The CHAIRMAN: I must acquaint the Committee with the fact that I misrepresented the position. The schedule is separate from Clause 2. I shall now put that clause.

Mr. WATTS: This is an extraordinary position. I was of the opinion, with due deference to you, Sir, that you were on the right lines in taking the schedule and Clause 2 as being the one thing. Until we pass the schedule we cannot say that we are authorising the execution of an agreement in the form of the schedule as presumed by Clause 2. In my opinion we cannot pass Clause 2 separately, but only as

including the schedule. To carry Clause 2, saying that we will subscribe to the schedule as printed, and then to set to work to amend the schedule is not very satisfactory.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the Leader of the Opposition wish to move to disagree with my ruling?

Mr. Doney: There will be a big debate if that is done.

The CHAIRMAN: I still maintain that the schedule is separate from Clause 2. If the schedule is substantially in the form of the agreement we can still adopt it, but we will not know that until we pass the schedule.

Mr. WATTS: I have no desire to disagree with your ruling, Mr. Chairman, but I do desire to have the position explained to us as to what course we should take in regard to Clause 2 if we substantially amend the schedule.

The CHAIRMAN: I doubt whether that would make much difference. We still agree to the schedule, substantially, in accordance with the form of the agreement.

Mr. WATTS: If we pass Clause 2 we may still move amendments to the schedule.

The CHAIRMAN: Undoubtedly. I did not intend to debar any member from moving amendments to the schedule by giving the ruling I did. I will now put Clause 2.

Clause put and passed.

Schedule:

Mr. WATTS: There are many amendments of which notice was to be given. I can move one if I can obtain the notice in the draft.

The Minister for Lands: You have had it since last Tuesday.

Mr. Doney: It took the debate to elucidate many points that were not previously understood.

Mr. WATTS: All the amendments are here. I move an amendment—

That at the end of Subclause (1) of Clause 15 of the schedule, the following words be added:—“Until otherwise determined by the Parliament of the State the Rural and Industries Bank of Western Australia shall be the authority.”

Everyone knows what the clause provides. During his speech the Premier suggested that it might be the mortgage bank of the Commonwealth or the Rural Industries

Bank of Western Australia. I had previously come to the conclusion that there was no doubt as to what institution should be in charge of the matter. It is obvious that it would have to be an institution allied to the State, and I believe the Rural and Industries Bank had been constituted in advance with the objective of undertaking a certain amount of responsibility as to these proposals when they came before Parliament.

Parliament should have a say in including the Rural and Industries Bank in this measure so that it might be known that there is no opposition to its operating, rather than that, having passed the legislation and having wished the institution the best of luck in its work, we should in future have to show our confidence in it on this aspect of land settlement. I have put in the amendment the words, "until the Parliament of the State otherwise determines", which is a customary provision in many measures, in case Parliament may at some stage decide that the institution is not the one we thought it was, in which case we could alter or retract our decisions.

The PREMIER: I applaud the sentiments behind the desire of the Leader of the Opposition and I am anxious that the business of financing soldier settlement should go to the Rural and Industries Bank. There will be certain charges associated with the administration by any credit authority of the affairs of soldier settlement and those costs will mean a profit or recompense being paid to the authority financing for the Commonwealth. Though it is my desire that all business available should go to the Rural and Industries Bank, I think the course suggested by the Leader of the Opposition might easily have the opposite effect. The Commonwealth obviously must ensure that the financing authority is a competent one, capable of handling this type of business and that it is organised in a way to suit the business offering.

I would be very concerned if the Commonwealth took umbrage at such a proposal as this. Its attitude might easily be that if it can put the business in the way of the Rural and Industries Bank, because of its ramifications and development, it is likely to do so. It might be less likely to do so if we insist that it should do so. The Commonwealth has a financing authority of greater magnitude than the State has and

this scheme is financed by the Commonwealth. Losses on some phases are to be shared with the State. I would be reluctant to do anything that might force the Commonwealth to turn down the proposal.

Mr. SEWARD: Does not the Premier recognise that this would be the voice of Parliament and not the voice of the Government conducting these negotiations? The Bill is now before Parliament and Parliament could express the opinion that it wanted the matter handled by the Rural and Industries Bank. Much of the trouble into which settlers got was caused by the fact that money was advanced to them on sheep, regardless of the value of the animals. In drought years farmers refused to get rid of their stock because they could raise finance on them, and that led to tragedy. We should take precautions to avoid a return to that in future, and Parliament should express an opinion that the Rural and Industries Bank should do this work.

The PREMIER: I hope there is no misunderstanding on this matter. This would be a substantial amendment to this agreement and could hold up the ratification of it. The Commonwealth has an instrumentality in this State handling all forms of banking and, while I think the Commonwealth will give the State instrumentality the favour of its business, this amendment might endanger that prospect.

Mr. McDONALD: I am in sympathy with the amendment but am impressed by the consideration that the Commonwealth might legitimately regard this amendment as substantial. I do not want Parliament to have to answer to the returned soldiers of the State for a delay in passing this legislation. I am worried about any amendment that might be deemed to be substantial, as the consequences would be serious to the returned soldiers and to the scheme, and would put this House in an invidious position in having to answer for the amendment.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. LESLIE: I move an amendment—

That at the end of Subclause (1) of Clause 15 of the schedule the following words be added:—"The rate of interest payable by the settler for such advances shall be not more than 2½ per cent. per annum."

Mr. J. Hegney: Why 2½ per cent.?

Mr. LESLIE: Because that is considered the maximum that represents a payable

proposition. In fact 2 per cent. seems to be the recognised figure when the rental charge on productive value is arrived at. That is what was arrived at by the R.S.L. after working out costs over a period of years. The Rural Reconstruction Commission also recommended that 2 per cent. interest should be chargeable in the second five-year period, the first five-year period being interest-free. After the second five-year period, the Commonwealth Bank mortgage rate of interest was to apply. I have added the extra $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. because an additional amount will be required to cover administration and other charges.

The PREMIER: The allusion made by the member for Mt. Marshall to the Rural Reconstruction Commission cannot apply. Its proposal envisaged an entirely different set of circumstances. In his own words, the first five years were to be free of interest but in the second five-year period half the rate of interest was to apply. The hon. member's statement that 2 per cent. was to be the interest rate was not correct. The Commission suggested a concessional rate of interest. On the other hand, under the amendment the interest rate will be in perpetuity, irrespective of the cost of money. In view of all these circumstances, the Government could not accept any provision for interest to be charged at a rate outside the cost of the loan raisings to finance the scheme. In all fairness, not more than that should be the interest charged.

Mr. LESLIE: I cannot find off-hand the reference in the report of the Rural Reconstruction Commission, but in the extract I took from it 2 per cent. is the rate of interest mentioned. It is suggested that under this scheme some concession is being made to ex-servicemen but evidently no such concession is to be made because the cost at which the money is to be raised, plus administration and other charges, is to be the cost to the settler.

Mr. Abbott: What about his training?

The Minister for Lands: And what about his block which is to be cleared, ready for him to go on, the cost of which is to be divided between the Commonwealth and State Governments as another concession?

Mr. LESLIE: I agree that the soldier settler will receive concessions there, but the principle applied is that the settler will bear

the cost of settlement. The evidence submitted to the Rural Reconstruction Commission and also to Mr. Justice Pyke at his inquiry was that the cost of stock, equipment and implements represented the biggest burden that the soldier settler had to carry, and that applies to interest as well.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That at the end of Subclause (1) of Clause 16 of the schedule the following proviso be added:—"Provided that the holder of every such perpetual lease shall have an option which may be exercised at any time after five years after the granting of such lease to acquire the fee simple of the land comprised in such lease by paying in cash to the State the full amount of the value of the holding as originally determined under Clause 6 of this agreement and any matter necessary and specified in the agreement with the credit authority."

I do so in pursuance of my remarks on the second reading, because I believe the option should be available on those terms. They are as generous as one could possibly be in that regard. It has been suggested that in a period of years it might be possible to vary the agreement. There will be nothing wrong in varying the agreement at the end of the period of years to liberalise the option rights of the settler if deemed advisable at that time. It could be on some basis other than payment of the whole amount in cash. I merely suggest that at this stage it should be on the basis of a cash payment, because that was the proposal I discussed at the second reading stage.

The PREMIER: The question of perpetual lease and freehold was one of the points of fundamental difference between the Commonwealth and the States concerned. The Commonwealth on its part made quite clear the fact that its policy was definitely in favour of perpetual lease, and when it came to the matter of the financing soldier settlement in three States the Commonwealth insisted upon the leasehold principle being accepted. No argument either on the merits of freehold or of leasehold made any impression upon the Commonwealth representatives, either Ministers or officers. It is the determined and accepted policy of the Commonwealth that the leasehold principle shall obtain. The Commonwealth might be right in its contention, but only by the passing of time.

and by experience of the advantages or disadvantages that may accrue to the returned man can we measure its effect in the development that follows initial settlement on his block.

I hope that, as a result of our having given expression to the views of this Parliament, the Commonwealth will realise that it is anticipated that a full review of that aspect shall be made at an appropriate time. If the Leader of the Opposition would agree to the insertion of a proviso to the effect that the matter be reviewed at the end of a period, which would meet the position with all its implications, I would have little objection to the proposal, but I am confident that the amendment before us would be wholly unacceptable to the Commonwealth and would lead us into the position indicated by the member for West Perth if alterations in policy were insisted upon by us. If the Leader of the Opposition will move that this be made subject to review at a particular date, I, and I think the Minister for Lands, would be prepared to accept the amendment, but to fly in the face of the avowed and pronounced policy of the Commonwealth would be seeking trouble over the ratification of the agreement.

Mr. WATTS: I shall be delighted to accede to the Premier's request. If the Minister will now report progress, I will get an amendment drafted and submit it to-morrow.

Progress reported.

BILL—INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (RESUMPTION OF LAND).

Message.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

BILL—SUPREME COURT ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Council's Request for Conference.

Message from the Council received and read requesting a conference on amendment No. 2 insisted on by the Assembly

and notifying that, should a conference be agreed to, the Council would be represented by three managers.

House adjourned at 11.25 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 28th November, 1945.

	PAGE
Question: Mount Hospital, as to closing of children's ward	2244
Bills: Local Authorities (Reserve Funds) Act	
Amendment, 3R.	2245
Justices Act Amendment, 3R.	2245
South-West State Power Scheme, report	2245
State Electricity Commission, recom.	2245
Public Works Act Amendment, 1R.	2253
Public Service Appeal Board Act Amendment, 1R.	2253
State Government Insurance Office Act Amendment, Assembly's further Message	2253
Child Welfare Act Amendment (No. 2), 2R., Com., report	2253
Building Operations and Building Materials Control, 2R.	2260
Government Employees (Promotions Appeal Board), Assembly's request for Conference	2264
Criminal Code Amendment, 2R.	2264

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

QUESTION.

MOUNT HOSPITAL.

As to Closing of Children's Ward.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT (for Hon. J. G. Hislop) asked the Chief Secretary:

1, Is the Government aware that the Mount Hospital has closed its children's ward?

2, In view of the fact that this was the only hospital, apart from the Children's Hospital, which set aside accommodation especially for children and that the closure of this ward means that there is now no accommodation for sick children in the metropolitan area, what steps does the Government intend to take in order to meet this need?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

1, and 2, The Mount Hospital is an institution controlled as a self-contained private enterprise. Inquiry from the hospital indicates that the closure of this ward is tem-