

Legislative Assembly,*Wednesday, 16th November, 1927.*

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

QUESTION—MAIN ROADS BOARD, RESPONSIBILITY.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Works: As to contracts under the Federal Aid Roads Act, will he advise whether the Main Roads Board proposes to adopt as a definite policy the repudiation either in whole or in part of responsibility in respect to the repair of roads damaged by cartage of material for contracts under the scheme?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: The Commonwealth Government have refused to allow the cost of repairing damaged roads to be charged to funds available under the Federal Aids Roads Agreement. No reason for this decision has been given, but no doubt it is because of the very material benefits the local authorities receive by reason of the construction of the new roads which occasioned some damage to minor roads.

BILLS (4)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Leighton—Robb's Jetty Railway.
- 2, Metropolitan Town Planning Commission.
- 3, Town Planning and Development.
Introduced by the Minister for Works.
- 4, Audit Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Premier.

BILL—RACING RESTRICTION.

Third Reading.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [4.36]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

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

| | |
|--------------|----|
| Ayes | 21 |
| Noes | 14 |

Majority for 7

AYES.

| | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| Mr. Barnard | Mr. Munsie |
| Mr. Brown | Mr. Richardson |
| Mr. Collier | Mr. Sampson |
| Mr. George | Mr. J. M. Smith |
| Mr. W. D. Johnson | Mr. Taylor |
| Mr. E. B. Johnston | Mr. Thomson |
| Mr. Kennedy | Mr. Troy |
| Mr. Latham | Mr. C. P. Wansbrough |
| Mr. Lindsay | Mr. Wilson |
| Mr. McCallum | Mr. North |
| Sir James Mitchell | |

(Teller.)

NOES.

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| Mr. Corboy | Mr. Mann |
| Mr. Coverley | Mr. Marshall |
| Mr. Cunningham | Mr. Millington |
| Mr. Griffiths | Mr. Rowe |
| Mr. Heron | Mr. Sleeman |
| Miss Holman | Mr. Withers |
| Mr. Lutey | Mr. Clydesdale |

(Teller.)

Question thus passed.

Bill read a third time and passed.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1927-28.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 10th November; Mr. Lutey in the Chair.

Department of Lands, Migration and Industries (Hon. M. F. Troy, Minister).

Vote—Lands and Surveys, £75,350:

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [4.34]: May I suggest to the Minister for Works that when he introduces a Railway Bill, particularly one to open up agricultural lands, he should hang a map on the wall. I make this suggestion because though we probably know the country, we can see it much better if we have the railways, as proposed, marked upon the map. It would save considerable time during the discussion in the House if this were done. I am glad the soldier settlement scheme is as satisfactory as has been stated by the Minister. There have been settled 5,336 soldiers. The advances given to them under the Act total £5,709,018, and they have repaid £1,002,481, leaving outstanding a sum of £4,696,537. The Minister says that there is provision

made to cover losses. Under the 12½ per cent. rebate to cover losses we have the amount of £700,000, and a special grant of £796,000, making a total of £1,496,000. Up to date the sum of £494,255 has been written off as losses or rebate. That leaves a total of £1,001,745 to cover further losses. The Treasurer has this money now, and we are saving £60,000 a year by way of interest. The sum of £796,000 was written off the total indebtedness to the Commonwealth. Rightly speaking the sum of £60,000 saved by way of interest should be added to this sum. The scheme is the first under which we received financial assistance for the development of our country, and, after covering losses, we shall have something over for the benefit of the soldier. The Minister says, "These amounts will be recovered from the Commonwealth." We have already had the 12½ per cent. rebate, and we have credit for £796,000. That is highly satisfactory. Under the Bruce migration agreement we are to receive a rebate of £3,825,000 in the expenditure on development of £10,000,000. There will be losses, and this rebate, as we get it, should be credited to a trust account in order that the losses may be met. The Premier has set aside £150,000 which he hopes to hold as a fund to assist in covering losses, but the total rebate should be credited to a special fund. I accept the full responsibility for everything that happened under the group settlement scheme until the 17th April 1924. My Government originated the scheme. By the Mitchell agreement the expenditure to the date of my leaving office covered the work of the officials, including the selection of the land. For all this I accept full responsibility. I expected to have the work of my administration criticised. I am not, however, responsible for the administration of group settlement since I left office. No one would expect me to take that responsibility. Up to the time when I left office, for everything that happened I take the fullest possible responsibility. I cannot get the detailed expenditure to the 17th April, 1924, because that was not the end of the year. I have, however, got it to the 30th June, 1924, and shall endeavour to show that the expenditure under my Government resulted in a corresponding asset. That is all anyone could be expected to show. Neither can I hold the present Minister responsible for anything that happened up to the time he came into power except as a member of the Govern-

ment. He has only recently started to control the scheme. The Minister says that up to the 30th September, 1927, the sum of £4,650,000 had been expended on group settlement, exclusive of roads and drainage. Up to the 30th June, 1924, the sum of £1,053,090 had been expended, exclusive of roads and drainage, leaving an expenditure since the 30th June, 1924, of £3,596,910. The average expenditure on 2,289 settlers up to the 30th June, 1924, was £460, while the average expenditure to date on 2,289 settlers is £2,031. Since the 30th June, 1924, the average expenditure on group settlers was £1,571. I have been criticised not only here, but in the English papers, in connection with group settlement. I must, therefore, put up figures to defend my administration. To complete the groups on the same basis of expenditure as to the 30th June, 1924, that is to say, in connection with 2,296 blocks, I intend to quote certain figures. The Minister will find these figures set out in "Hansard" of the 12th August, 1924, in the speech of Mr. Angwin.

The Minister for Lands: I asked my officials to find it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister said he could not find these figures in "Hansard." On clearing, ploughing, pastures, water and fencing the sum of £578,934 was spent. According to Mr. Angwin's statements made on the 12th August, 1924, the clearing done consisted of 21,613 acres; ploughing, 16,625 acres; pastures, 11,845 acres; wire fencing expenditure, £33,575; wells were sunk and much land was partly cleared. There were 2,296 blocks, and 25 acres cleared on each block. On clearing the land, water provisions and fencing, we expended £578,934. To complete this work on the same basis should have cost another £851,066. Up to that stage the total expenditure on the work should have been £1,430,000. We had constructed 1,220 cottages at a cost of £273,113. To have provided cottages for each of the remaining 1,076 blocks should have cost £243,100, making a total of £516,213. Then, the stock, horses, carts, machinery, etc., should have cost not more than £459,000, making a total of £2,405,213. The average per farm works out on these figures at £1,047. If we add one-fifth to cover sundries, administration, etc., we get £209, which makes a total of £1,256, which should have been sufficient to complete the work of the groups as they were on the 17th

April, 1924. The administration charges for 1923-24 amounted to £26,068; for 1924-25 they amounted to £48,383; and for 1925-26 the administrative charges increased to £82,659, three times as much as they were during my last year. There were only 1,278 persons settled at the end of June, 1923, but the total expenditure then was £502,579. During 1923-24 the numbers were brought up to 2,296, and the sum of £818,972 was expended, or a total expenditure under this head of £1,321,551. I admit that my last year was not a full year, for settlers were brought on to the groups during that year. This figure does not include roads, drainage, etc. In 1924-25 the total expenditure on 2,229 settlers was £983,951, or a total average per man of £441. That was a full year. At 10s. a day the cost of sustenance would have been £347,724. For 1925-26 the total expenditure on 2,244 settlers was £1,197,714, an average of £538, and at 10s. a day the cost would have been £349,964. For 1926-27 the total expenditure on 2,048 settlers was £1,428,856, an average of £698, and at 10s. a day the cost would have been £319,488. The total expenditure for the three years was £3,610,521. If the settlers had been paid 10s. a day for the three years 1924 to 1927, the cost of sustenance would have been £1,017,176, leaving the enormous sum to be expended otherwise than on the payment of the 10s. a day, amounting to £2,593,345. The total expenditure on the Peel and Oakland Estates to the 30th June, 1924, was £869,096, less expenditure on the Peel and Oakland groups of £274,015, leaving a total of £595,081 spent other than on group settlements. There are many soldier settlers on the Peel Estate apart from the groups. The total expenditure on the Peel and Oakland Estates and on all group settlement on the 30th June, 1924, was £1,926,821, including roads and drainage. We are now told that the expenditure on those two estates, including groups on the estates, is £2,000,000. That is an enormous sum, and means an expenditure of over £1,100,000 since I left office. At that time most of the drainage works, most of the road construction, and a great deal of the settlement, including houses, etc., had been finalised. I do not know where this sum of over £1,100,000 has gone. The Minister says the total expenditure on these estates and group settlement has been £6,000,000. I am not responsible for the expenditure of the last £4,000,000 of that amount. The new board which the

Minister has appointed will, I am sure, do excellent work. It consists of Mr. Hewby, Mr. Rose and Mr. Mazzeletti. Mr. Hewby is attending to the financial side of the scheme, and will do so better than the other two members of the board, who are farmers. Mr. Rose is a successful farmer in the South-West, and Mr. Mazzeletti is a successful farmer in the Denmark district. Their personal experience ought to enable them to handle groups well. The brief report read to us by the Minister agrees with his statement regarding blocks to be abandoned. I am sorry the board made that report quite so early. I think they should have got correct figures and made a definite statement. In my opinion, they ought not to offer highly speculative figures regarding blocks to be abandoned. However, their job does not bulk large. Most great undertakings are made up of a mere multiplicity of small things. The work the board are doing is in that category. It is the making of one small farm multiplied by two thousand. So it ought to be a fairly simple matter. I consider that the board have been a little precipitate in submitting that report. However, I shall not criticise it, because I am very hopeful they will do good work, and personally I want to give them the best possible chance. The Minister set, I think, a wrong construction on the evidence given by Mr. Brockman. The Minister said that Mr. Brockman had had nothing to guide him. In fact, Mr. Brockman had the work of successful settlers to guide him, and his evidence said so.

The Minister for Lands: There is also the evidence of Mr. Carter.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I have no objection at all to that. The Minister recently dealt a good deal with the light lands problem in the wheat belt, and I am quite certain he will admit that a few years ago he did not see in our light lands what he sees in them to-day. I agree with his statement that the question of dealing with light lands has to be faced carefully. When it comes to making permanent farms on light land, we shall have to be very sure of the price of wheat. I am not in any way questioning the Minister's caution with regard to light lands, but I do say that the opinion we held a few years ago concerning our light lands is very different from that which we hold to-day. It is not so long since in this Chamber the settlement of the wheat belt was criticised. None of the

wheat belt was said to be any good. One hon. member said I ought to be impeached because in settling the wheat belt I had separated husband and wife, and all that sort of thing.

The Premier: That was the P.P.A. of the day.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No; it was the P.L.P., I think.

The Minister for Lands: You remember that I endorsed your wheat belt proposition.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am glad the Minister did. I believe the hon. gentleman offered less opposition to that proposition than any other member of the Chamber. It is a good thing to be right once in one's life.

The Minister for Lands: I always said you were right.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes. However, the public were against the proposition. They really believed that the State was running great risks and wasting millions of money. They could not be blamed for that.

The Premier: That opinion was largely due to the propaganda of the Country Party of that day.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I loathe going back into "Hansard"; I like to go forward. But it would be rather interesting if some hon. member with a little leisure would turn back the pages of "Hansard" and see exactly what was said about the wheat belt. The point, however, is that the public were then wrong in their estimate of the wheat belt; and just as they were wrong then, so I think they will prove to be wrong in their present estimate of the South-West.

The Minister for Lands: The difference is that the wheat belt started at the beginning of bad seasons and low prices.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Concerning the wheat belt proposition it was said that the land was no good, that the climate was no good, and that the settlers were no good. In those days it became popular to condemn the wheat belt. Frankness is never appreciated, and does not tend to secure popularity. Any man who in those days declared the wheat belt to be good would have had nine out of ten persons against him. The opinion of the majority proved to be wrong. However, that is over and done with. According to a letter which reached me only yesterday, at South-

ern Cross, which is the furthest east point of wheat belt settlement, 10 bags per acre are being stripped, and nine and eight and seven bags are common. Undoubtedly the season there has been wonderful. Still, it is a great thing to have had that production.

Hon. G. Taylor: There is no reason why we should not have it in future.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: In a place 237 miles from where we are standing, the farmers are stripping 10 bags of wheat to the acre. We were told that 100 miles east of Perth was the limit to which we should go in wheat settlement. It has to be borne in mind that the wheat belt is a north-south belt running from the Murchison River to the Stirling Ranges, and that every additional mile in its width means a tremendous thing for the State. The price of wheat is everything. Wheat growing is like running a store. If you buy a toy horse and a motor car and want to sell them, and if the toy horse has cost you 1s., you must put its price up to 1s. 6d. in order to make a profit, and if you bought the motor car at £500 you must get £550 for it to secure a profit. If you put wheat into a bag at a cost of 4s. per bushel and the price of wheat drops to 3s. 11d., you will soon drop wheat growing. It is all a matter of price. The seller has to get more for his article than it costs him, or else he must stop. With the high protection under which the farmers suffer, everything they do—clearing, fencing, water conservation and so on to the end—is subject to much higher wages because high protection has made it impossible for people to live unless they get high wages. The costs have been put up by purely artificial means. Fertiliser, bags, transport, in fact everything connected with the production and transport of wheat, has been made dearer by artificial means to the extent of at least 50 per cent. The £1 which was once spent has now to be 30s. Multiplying the difference of 10s. by 300 or 400 shows the additional cost to be a serious thing. I do not know how the present high costs are to come down, but if wheat falls in price they will have to come down. That problem ought to concern the Federal Parliament. It is only the 5s. price of wheat that has made it possible for farmers to do well while paying the high costs. By artificial means 50 per cent. has been added to the outgoings of a farm. That is a fearful han-

dieap, but it has been met hitherto by the high price of wheat. I believe wheat will keep up in price because of the growing population of the world and the consequently growing demands for foodstuffs, and also because the world has not been opening up new country by railways, and indeed has not a great deal of new land to open up. I hope, therefore, that except temporarily, and that infrequently, the price of wheat will not fall; but we cannot bank on 5s. per bushel, and therefore the cost of production ought to be kept down. We must view the production of everything just as the merchant views the importation of anything he wishes to sell. At Southern Cross, where the land was merely scratched with the plough, an English farmer with two fine sons and a wife is getting 10 bags to the acre. He went there last February 12 months, cleared 400 acres, put in 30lbs. of seed and 40lbs. of fertiliser to the acre, scratched the land, and used only the cheapest possible methods for putting in the crop. The wheat, when stripped, may not cost him more than 1s. per bushel. However, he had a wonderful season; and the result is just a wonderful happening, on the repelition of which we cannot bank. I suppose that partienlar wheat will be the cheapest wheat grown in the world. Two men living at Dowerin, who won the gold medal and the silver medal for wheat years ago at the Anglo-French Exhibition, grew their wheat, the sixth crop, without a plough. But they, of course, were in a heavier rainfall than that of Southern Cross. While we all say to the farmer "You ought to fallow and work your land well," we say it partly because one must say it; but if we were out in the country with a few hundred acres cleared, and could scratch in a crop at a cheap cost, we would do it. The risk is run, but it is a risk worth running. There is not much gained in this world without running risks. If wheat remains at 5s., we have an unlimited area that will grow it, including land that will not of itself make a farm. If wheat comes back to 4s., our area will of course be considerably limited. We had hundreds of thousands of acres of sand plain under crop during the war, and when the price of wheat fell all that land reverted to nature, simply because wheat could not be produced on it to sell at 3s. 6d. The Minister was wrong in his references to Mr. Downes. He said Mr. Downes had worked on the D. L. estate, and had previously

been a settler on land adjacent to the city. Mr. Downes was the first to grow clover in a big way on poor land in Western Australia. That was at Serpentine. He grew clover on 150 acres of poor land. The Minister for Works knows the place. When I visited it Mr. Downes had about 10 sheep to the acre—the third lot of sheep for the year. The land was very poor land. He sold it for £7,000, equivalent to about £40 per acre for the part under clover. I have not been on the place since, and do not know what it is like now. However, Mr. Downes was the first man in this State to grow clover on poor land in a big way. I mentioned that my administration had been criticised not by the Minister, and by critics outside, and also by the "Times" correspondent, who wrote to that newspaper a letter calculated to do this State harm.

The Premier: It is a pity that we do not know the persons in Western Australia who write those articles in English newspapers.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Really, all of us are a little inclined to tell the worst. The other day there was some rust in the Midland district, and, astonishing to relate, a statement was published in the Press about it. If a little rust occurred in the Eastern States, the matter would certainly not be made public. Naturally the whole of the wheat grown in that area came under the ban of suspicion, although probably the whole thing occurred because a few unsuitable varieties of wheat were grown. As a matter of fact, I made inquiries and I found that apart from two or three varieties of wheat, the occurrence of rust was by no means general. It is a pity that the truth cannot be stated about these matters. The effect of that publication is to place the whole district under suspicion, and if I were seeking to buy a farm in this State I would avoid a district that was said to be suffering from the occurrence of rust in the crops. The same thing applies regarding the appearance of thrip in our apples. We have made quite a song about that. In the East they have considerably more trouble in connection with their fruit and other crops than we have. They would send their apples with codlin moth to us at any time if we would allow their supplies to land on our wharves. The people in the East are not all the time talking about the codlin moth in their apples, or their potato flies, or the other diseases that are present. We are too prone to talk about our troubles and

often criticisms are wide of the mark. Recently the Western Australian correspondent of the London "Times" saw fit to criticise the land settlement schemes in this State. He said that in the inauguration of the group settlement scheme there was too much haste and not enough attention given to detail. There was no haste, and every detail was well thought out. There were 1,278 settlers to the end of June, 1923. That represented about 18 months work. Just imagine it being said that we were too hasty in proceeding at that rate! In the next year there were 1,018 settlers. Yet it is said that there was too much haste. I say that if we do not go much faster than we have done so far, this country will not be in the possession of white men in 50 years' time. Land settlement is the one great industry that we can develop rapidly. We have no considerable secondary industries and therefore our one great opportunity is in connection with the land. Yet it is said there has been too much haste! I have endeavoured to show that the scheme in detail was carefully considered, and I know that the expenditure was carefully scrutinised to the 17th June, 1924. It has to be remembered that I was not without some Ministerial experience, nor was I inexperienced in connection with land settlement. I had under my Ministerial control the settlement of the wheat belt for some years and I suffered criticism. I knew that the development of the South-West would not be any more popular than had been the settlement of the wheat belt. I knew what to expect. It was not expected that the settlement of the South-West would be admitted by critics to have been as carefully thought out as had been the development of the wheat belt 20 years earlier. However, there was no haste, and every detail was cared for. We are never likely to suffer in Western Australia because we go too fast, but rather because we do not go fast enough. Land settlement here is a really wonderful thing, and I believe that the amount of money invested in the agricultural and pastoral industries of the State—when I talk about the amount invested, I include the efforts of the workers who have engaged in the task of land settlement too—reaches something like £100,000,000. The production this year will be worth at least £20,000,000. I wonder if we ever think how much is invested in them and how important these industries are. Do we ever consider the great work this country has

been doing with the aid of men without capital or experience? When speaking to a man some years ago I asked him what was the first quality he would look for in a man who was to become a farmer. He replied, "I would want him to be able to groom horses."

The Minister for Lands: I want perseverance and industry.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, but this man had more experience! Of course, it is easy to get some men with perseverance, and industry too, but it is not so easy to get men who are accustomed to the care of horses. The point I want to make is that in the days before the appearance of motor cars in England, everyone kept horses, and many men learnt how to care for them. A great proportion of those men were residents of towns and when they went on the farms in Western Australia, they knew how to look after settlers' horses. Thus they were able to go on the land and to carry on. Then again, there have been millions of people in England with small plots that they were able to work. I saw many such plots when I was in England. They were part of the reserves. Plots about the size of the Legislative Assembly Chamber were to be seen all over the place, and on them were grown vegetables of various descriptions. People were to be seen streaming about the parks and yet they did not touch a potato or a pea or a tomato, or whatever was growing on the various plots, despite the fact that all were quite unprotected. People are encouraged to grow vegetables in that way, and thousands of them reap some such experience before leaving the Old Country. Any experience of growing things is useful to a farmer. Most women can grow vegetables, and I think it is due to that fact that many men have succeeded on the land in Western Australia. Canada has invested £1,500,000,000 in agriculture, and last year their production represented £237,000,000. Thus if we have £100,000,000 invested in our agricultural and pastoral industries with a return of £20,000,000, we have achieved practically the same percentage as Canada has. I have no means of arriving accurately at the amount invested, but I believe we have the sum I mention. It is a comfortable feeling to know that it is there. If we delve into these figures, they disclose what a magnificent asset we have in our State. As the Minister stated the other evening, this great industry is the

only big absorber of young men. It is practically impossible for men to get work in this State except in connection with the land. If we are to absorb any great number of men in the wheat belt, a lot of the light land will have to be used, and that means that we will have to build more roads and railways. The other day I said that if we built 500 miles of railway and opened 8,000,000 acres of land, it would be a good thing. We have not so many millions of acres of land adjacent to our railways, even including poor land, if we exclude the timber reserves and take out the millions of acres that have been served by railways already, more than once. Some of the land is already served twice over by railway lines and, in the case of Merredin, the centre is five times served by the various junctions. If we take them out, I do not think we have 6,000,000 acres of land adjacent to railway lines, even if we include the timber reserves. Thus we must have railways if we are to settle more people. I saw from a return dealing with the land used in the United States, that the area taken by railways, roads and towns represents 40,000,000 acres. The Western Australian correspondent of the London "Times" in his article in the issue of the 20th September, 1927, made various statements that were answered by my old friend, the Agent-General, who acted promptly, and also by Lady Apsley. In her letter to the "Times" Lady Apsley pointed out that the group settlement scheme in Western Australia was not a failure and would be a great success. However, the harm is done. The publication of such statements cannot be overtaken.

The Minister for Lands: There is no harm done. The pressure in connection with migration still continues in England, so that no harm can have been done.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Everyone knows that there are thousands of people waiting to come out to Western Australia, but the harm is done because the right class of people, when they read such reports, refrain from coming. These stinking fish reports must do a lot of harm. If the statements represented the truth, it would be a different matter. I do not know that the writer has been careful in his statements of fact, either. In any case I think the article contains many stupid statements to emanate from anyone in this State, and although it looks as if it were inspired, the article contains much that is damaging and untrue.

The Premier: There are some men in this State who get a living by writing that sort of matter to papers in the Old Country, and who should be deported if we knew who they were.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes.

The Premier: They live in the State and defame it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I intend writing to the London "Times" myself, but statements of this description take a lot of catching up. It is a fact that the South-West of this State is as important and valuable as the wheat belt is, in its way, and as the northern pastoral lands are in their way. However, we have a glorious task before us in developing the South-West. Climate means so much in the production of our crops and we have as fine a climate in the South-West as can be found in any other part of the world. It is true that the South-West is not popular, and that it is popular with some people to deery it. If I sought temporary popularity I would deery it, but it is not in me to deery anything in Western Australia. I think the Premier will admit that I am not happy in criticising when I do feel that I must criticise, and that I am never so happy as when I am able to say something in which I thoroughly believe, regarding the great State in which we live. It is not because I was born here that such things appeal to me. I believe in Western Australia thoroughly, and during my public life I have made many statements none of which, I believe, could be challenged after the lapse of time. I know it is always popular to deery any suggestion that is new or anything that looks like constructive work. Thus it is easy to deery the work undertaken in the South-West. I will read an article to the House—not the damned article that appeared in the London "Times," because this would make members feel ill for a week. The article I will read represents a statement made by Mr. Prowse at Mr. Money's South-West conference. Mr. Prowse is a brother of the Federal member. He started in a small way, has farmed in the South-West for some years and has achieved wonders. I commend the statement to the attention of members. It appeared in the "South Western Times" on the 1st November, 1927, and was reported as follows:—

He had often been laughed at for saying that there was no good land and no really bad land in the South-West. He said there was no good land because there was not an acre

of it could be planted without using artificial manure, and there was no poor land because the poorest of it responded to superphosphate just as quickly as the best of it. The poorest of their country was the beachy sand and even that had its value, because the ridges of it were in low lying country and provided shelter for stock and a dry lying up place, and being a camping ground for stock it was gradually built up and would eventually respond to artificial manure. Recently he showed a Victorian over some of his pastures which had never been ploughed. The land was originally covered in paper barks and mint. His method was to chop down and kill the trees, burn, and then top dress and sow the land as he had described. To-day that land was equal to any pasture in the world, with grasses 2ft. 6in. high, with many English grasses and Dutch clover. He had used many various classes of manure and the land was now as level as a billiard table. When the Victorian visitor saw it he said "But this is Chinaman's garden land," meaning land which had had hundreds of loads of stable and stock manure on it and which was worked down like a garden bed. Every farmer must watch his land closely and find out what is required. It took millions of years to produce the little humus that was found in the soil and which was the basis of all plant food. Superphosphate only made it available for the plants, but if the humus was turned down by deep ploughing where the shallow rooting plants could not reach it, and then super was put on the land it was merely adding to the acidity of the soil and inducing the growth of sorrel where there should be a magnificent crop of clover.

With clearing consisting merely of chopping down and burning up, he produced that wonderful pasture. After referring to group settlement he continued:—

In three years they could produce pastures equal to land selling at £20 to £30 in the East. He invited the officials to visit his place at his expense where he was carrying more stock than any farmer in the South-West. On 1,000 acres he was carrying 400 head of cattle all the year round. What he had said was not said in a boastful spirit but so that the necessary impetus would be given to people on the groups who were despondent. "The opportunity is there for those who can handle it," concluded Mr. Prowse. "We should take the opportunity before it has gone from us."

Mr. Prowse tells of poor land being put under grass at a cost up to £3 10s. per acre and producing magnificent pasture. He goes on to say that the land is not better than the worst land on the groups. That is the statement of an experienced man. Years ago we tried similar methods but I suppose the work was not done properly. We tried it at Denmark many years ago, but now it is being done

all over the South-West. A friend of mine was advised by Professor Paterson that all his land needed was fertiliser. He said, "You do not want seed; all you want is fertiliser." The explanation was that part of his land had been growing clover for years and the seed was spread about. A few years ago we would have thought it impossible, but in hundreds of places this simple work is now being done and it means a tremendous saving of cost. It means that land can be placed under pasture with very little delay. That is something we have learnt in the last few years. I hope we shall get good results from the Group Settlement Board. The expenditure is the real trouble. All land will stand a certain amount of expenditure, but it will not stand an unlimited amount. The Group Settlement Board are capable of doing good work and they have the work to do.

The Premier: No three men in the State have a more important job at present.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is so, because if the group work is not successful, it will have the effect of tying up the rest of the South-West perhaps for years. We cannot afford to import from the Eastern States butter and other produce to the tune of two millions a year. If we were producing seven millions worth of gold, we might be able to send a couple of millions away for produce, but in the present circumstances we cannot afford to make such importations. We receive from the Eastern States eight million pounds worth of goods and send them only a million and a third. Consequently, we have to borrow the money to pay for the difference. We have to say to London, "Pay over to the credit of New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia £6,700,000 of our money." I do not say we can produce the whole of the eight million pounds worth, but we can produce £3,000,000 worth of the imported foodstuffs and it is a disgrace that we are not doing it. The prosperity of the State is held up because of the fact that our money is being sent to the Eastern States for produce that could be raised here. The gross production of wealth in this country is £27,000,000 and from that has to be deducted the value of all those imports. Money sent away for imports is money gone for ever. The man who last month produced £200 worth of butter fat—several of those supplying the

Bunbury butter factory did so--has kept £200 in this State and that money will grow. What has gone to the East has gone for ever; what we save grows.

The Premier: And that man would put the money back into the land and get £300 for it next year.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes. It is good to keep in mind that what we import from the East represents money gone, and what we save will grow. The 30 tons of butter produced at Bunbury last week represents money that will grow in the State for a long time to come. I hope the Government will not adopt the suggested 40 miles between railways as against the 25 miles. The Engineer-in-Chief evidently favours the greater distance, but I notice that Mr. McLarty and Mr. Camm object to the 40 miles distance. I was astonished to read the following paragraph in the "West Australian" of the 14th November--

The recent announcement by the Minister for Lands and Agriculture (Mr. M. F. Troy) that the trustees of the Agricultural Bank had decided to make advances on lands within 20 miles of an existing or authorised railway, has been favourably commented upon.

Where there is land 20 miles from an existing railway, and a line is likely to be built within five or ten miles of it, the system is perfectly safe. I suppose that is what the Agricultural Bank trustees are doing.

The Minister for Lands: That is so.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The paragraph continues--

Mr. Troy's definite statement that the extension of the bank's limit from 12½ miles to 20 miles does not in any way imply that the Government propose to build railways 40 miles apart, instead of 25 miles as at present has led to considerable conjecture as to what distance the Government really intend to set railways apart. It is believed that Mr. Bankes Amery, the representative of the British Government in Australia, favours railways in Western Australia being built 40 miles apart, but the State Government do not seem inclined to exceed a 30-mile limit.

The Minister for Lands: That is only the pressman's conjecture.

The Minister for Railways: Evidently made with the intention of drawing someone out.

The Premier: I think it would be absurd for a man in Mr. Bankes Amery's position to offer an opinion on it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The paragraph concluded--

A definite pronouncement upon this point by the Premier is being awaited with interest.

I hope the Government will not consider increasing the distance between railways beyond 25 miles. It is useless to think of road transport as being cheaper than railway. It costs as much to lay a mile of road as to lay a mile of railway; in fact, rather more. It costs 10d. to 1s. per ton per mile for road haulage, and if we take an average increase of four miles of carting by laying the railways 40 miles instead of 25 miles apart, it means 4s. for every ton of wheat grown. I live at Northam, 66 miles from Perth, and the freight is 9s. 5d. If I lived 100 miles away, I should have to pay only 10s. 11d., or 1s. 6d. more. For an additional four miles the railway haulage would be 2½d., but the road haulage would cost another 4s. per ton. We must serve our land by railways in a manner that will be effective, and it would not be right to adopt any distance greater than 25 miles. We cannot build and maintain roads for heavy motor traffic. Regarding the money being spent on roads now, the trouble will be not in construction, but for maintenance, and for all time the maintenance will be a fearful burden, notwithstanding that we are spending considerable sums and constructing the roads solidly. If we build thousands of miles of roads to carry heavy motor traffic instead of building railways, we shall be making a very sad mistake.

The Minister for Railways: No direct revenue comes from the roads as it does from the railways.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is so, but we require only sufficient from our railways to cover interest and working costs. It is not fair to make a land owner whose property abuts on the road keep the road in order. Why should a land owner near the Northam-road keep in repair the through road which is used a hundred times more by people from outside the district than by people in the district? It cannot be done under the stress of modern traffic and so railways must still be built. I think the cheap freights should apply to the nearest port. We must have the cheapest possible freight for our exporters and it should apply to the nearest port, but under the zone system that is not so. We ought, as far as possible, encourage producers to use the

railways in preference to the roads. The Minister for Works knows what it means to maintain roads running parallel with railways. To maintain the road from Perth to Bunbury or the road from Perth to Northam costs nearly as much as to keep a railway in order. All the traffic could go over the railway and it could be carried more cheaply, and we would save the enormous cost of maintaining the road to carry heavy traffic. I should like to hear what the Minister has to say on the question. I feel sure he will agree with me that it is not a good policy to maintain parallel with railways roads for heavy motor lorries that knock the roads to pieces. I do not suppose that Mr. Bankes Amery expressed the opinion credited to him. Anyhow, he is not qualified to do so.

The Premier: I do not think he expressed any such opinion. It has nothing to do with his business.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The man who is located five miles from a railway does not think he is so fortunate as the man who is only two miles away, and the man who is ten miles distant naturally considers he is too far. We should make provision so that producers can cover the journey to the railway station and back in a day. That should be the standard, and it is the only standard that will make for economical working. My object in speaking this afternoon was mainly to present figures on the group settlement work and especially on the South-West. A great deal could be said about land settlement generally, but it has been said so often that there is no need to repeat it on this occasion. I am glad to learn that the sick miners are getting the best land we can select for them, and I hope that everything that can be done for them will be done to make their lives comfortable. I do not know much about the dread disease from which the miners suffer, but I do know, having met these people, that the ravages of the disease are terrific. We need to give them all the help we can to make their lives as comfortable as possible. I have no more to say except that we have to stand by agricultural development wherever we have land to develop. We must have as many people as possible on the land, and particularly our own people, those who are trained for the land. We have schools of agriculture at Muresk and Narrogin, and students there must be encouraged to the fullest extent to go on the land, because that is their only hope. If they

take up land now, in the not very distant future they will be their own masters and will secure for themselves a competency. We must encourage our own people to become farmers. I am not referring to West Australian born people; I am referring to people now in the State. People have come from the Eastern part of Australia to take up land. We should encourage them in every way. That is the fairest thing to do and it will lead to success. It has been very hard to get our own people to go on the land. I made every effort that I possibly could to induce them to take up areas. When it comes to farming on small holdings it is something that they are not accustomed to. Many of them do not like milking cows and feeding pigs. Neither can we induce our own people to engage in the fishing industry; we have to get people from Greece or Italy to catch the fish we require.

The Minister for Lands: We must try to create a dairying atmosphere.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: In Victoria the dairying industry is worth as much as the wheat industry to that State. This year Victoria will not suffer to the same extent as we would suffer in similar circumstances, because that State has the dairying industry to fall back upon when the wheat crop, as is the case this year, is one half what it might have been. Unfortunately in Western Australia we send away every ounce of gold we produce to purchase butter and bacon. What we want to see here is that our people shall become land owners and land workers. Their chance will not be for ever, or even for very long. We cannot afford to wait. We must increase our national income tremendously if we are to live at the rate we are living now. If our extravagance is not curtailed the money that we produce will not be enough to support us. We cannot spend £3,000,000 on motor cars and petrol, and perhaps £4,000,000 on drapery unless we work hard for those things. Without production we cannot have a high standard of living.

The Premier: The only way to maintain a high standard of living is to increase production.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: There must be solid production. We cannot continue to export £15,000,000 worth of products and import £18,000,000 worth. If we had that £3,000,000 in our favour instead of against us, it would be circulated here to our advantage. We are living on im-

ported goods, which is wrong. If we continue in that way we shall also continue to pay a big interest bill on that £3,000,000 instead of having the money for circulation within the State. If we had it we could increase the national asset, which would mean providing work for people and additional trade all along the line. Trade is increased by the money that is circulated, and it can also provide a power of work. But we are not doing that; we are sending our pound away and we are not getting our pound's worth for it. It is very hard to get the people to understand.

MR. LINDSAY (Toodyay) [5.53]: I had much pleasure in listening to the Minister for Lands introduce his Estimates on Thursday night. He had a very pleasant story to tell. It must be very gratifying to him as Minister to know that the department under his control is flourishing and that the agricultural areas are responsible for a rapid increase in production. The Minister also dealt with several important subjects, some of which I intend to touch upon. The Minister referred to the alteration of the policy of the Agricultural Bank in dealing with land. I have had a great deal to do with the Agricultural Bank in the past in the way of securing loans for my constituents, and I have found that they have altered their policy somewhat in the last two or three years. Two years ago they wrote to me to the effect that they were not prepared to advance money on land that was more than 12½ miles from a railway, and also on not less than 640 acres of first-class land. Later on they informed me they would deal with the individual on his merits when that individual was 20 miles from a railway. The Bank has done that in my electorate for the last two years. About nine months ago the bank intimated its intention to advance up to 75 per cent. in districts to which a railway had been authorised, and where the land was first class and would be, when the line was constructed. 12½ miles from that line. The announcement of the Minister is gratifying to me because a deputation from East Mollerin waited on me this morning on the subject of advances. The people situated out there have not been able to get any assistance from the bank, but I hope, with the publication of the Minister's statement, that the Agricultural Bank will assist the settlers in that part of the State. In Western Australia I find that we have 31 million acres of land alien-

ated, or in process of alienation from the Crown. It has been said also that we have 68 million acres of land that can be utilised for mixed farming. I find also from statistics that we have 9,750,000 acres of land cleared or partially cleared. That is wonderful work for a small population such as ours. The area under cultivation has increased more rapidly during the last few years than ever before. I wish, however, to deal particularly with an article that appeared in our leading newspaper a little while ago. Talk about pessimism! This was the most pessimistic article I ever read regarding the resources of Western Australia. The article appeared in the "West Australian" on the 28th October last. When such statements are published as coming from an ordinary correspondent, we do not always believe them; and we do not take much notice of them, but when we find that they are made in the leading columns of the principal newspaper of the State, then it is time to reply. It is surprising to me how a newspaper, earning its profits in this country, should comment to the extent that the "West Australian" did in the article of the 28th October. This is what it said—

The value for agricultural purposes of the forest lands (the heavier lands) of Western Australia which lie within the zone of a 10-inch rainfall, has been definitely established. These lands, indeed, give promise under sustained scientific treatment of proving to be, acre for acre, among the most productive for wheat growing in the Commonwealth. But for every acre the State possesses of such country, many as those acres are, it can be no exaggeration to say that it embraces, within the same territorial limits, at least 20 acres of light land the real value of which is problematical.

It went on to say—

It is because of these at present extensive barren wastes that Western Australia has one mile of railway for every 92 units of its population.

That is the most damning statement ever made by a newspaper in Western Australia and the position is made worse when we know there is not a vestige of truth in it. It is not possible to find out how many acres of such land we have, but to say that in the 31 million acres selected we have 1,550,000 of first-class land and the rest is barren waste, when we know that we have nearly 10 million acres of land cleared in that area, is absurd. Then to say that an area of one million acres only is fit for agriculture is a statement that I cannot

understand a reputable newspaper making. I wish to tell the House my opinion of the land of Western Australia. I live in the country and I farm land. I might therefore be forgiven for saying that I know something about it. I have travelled through the country and I know something also about the light lands of the State. The Minister referred to the Light Lands Commission. Two and a half years ago the then Minister for Lands stated that we had 9 million acres of light lands that were 12½ miles from a railway that were practically useless. He appointed Mr. Bostock to report on those lands and the report was laid on the Table of the House. Mr. Bostock inspected 4,600,000 acres. Although he did not inspect all the light lands within 12½ miles of a railway, he inspected nearly all of them. But when he comes to look for 9,000,000 acres he finds only 4,600,000 acres. Since the date of that report nearly 2,000,000 acres of that land has been selected. So, if we have 31,000,000 acres alienated, and have only 2,600,000 acres left on the hands of the Crown, it must mean that the people of Western Australia do not know what the quality of the land is like. In the report of the Light Lands Commission certain recommendations were made. I do not agree with the findings of that Commission. We would have had much more information if there had been included in that Commission one or two practical light land farmers. The report was finalised by departmental officers, and in my opinion it was not of so much value as it would have been had it been finalised by practical men. A number of the recommendations I could not agree with. To say that one should not be allowed to sell the products of light lands for some years is absurd, for the only possible way of clearing light land is by setting fires through it in order to burn the timber. The Minister stated that the Agricultural Bank were advancing money on light lands. A little while ago I received a letter from the bank informing me they were prepared to advance up to 50 per cent. of the value of the improvements on good second class land of not less than 2,000 acres. In other words, they were not prepared to advance on third class land at all. If the development of our light lands is not as far ahead to-day as it should be, it is not altogether the fault of the land. To a great extent it is the fault of the Government departments. I have previously traced

the history of the settlement of light lands in Western Australia, and I propose to do so again. It was during the period 1911 to 1914 that some of the officials noticed that the light land under crop was producing reasonable results in the light rain-falls of those years. Consequently the Agricultural Bank advised settlers to clear light land, and even assisted them to do so. But the trouble was that while we were scratching our heavier land with the cultivator and using 45lbs. of seed to the acre, they advised us to do the same with the light land. That, we now know, leads straight to failure. The last time I spoke on this subject, the Minister contradicted me in the Press. He did not quote me correctly. What I said was that the Industries Assistance Board had done as much as anybody else to condemn light lands, inasmuch as they had advanced the same quantity of manure for light lands as for the heavier lands. In my own district a number of farms that were abandoned in those years have since been re-selected. They are now all improved and the farmers on them are thoroughly successful. That is the result of improved methods.

The Minister for Lands: But those who control the finances of the country have to walk carefully and always look for experience.

Mr. LINDSAY: I agree with that. In this instance they did assist the settlers to farm the light lands, and so I suppose we must not blame them too much.

The Minister for Lands: It was an error that anybody might have made.

Mr. LINDSAY: I agree with that. My trouble is not so much with the errors of the past, but that in consequence of those errors there was a large number of failures. Another reason for failure was this: those men had to get machinery and super and seed from the Industries Assistance Board, and very often they got it late. Moreover, generally speaking, the worst men seemed to be on the worst land. The result, of course, was additional failures. And all this was made much worse by the fact that after 1914 we had four very wet years consecutively. Light land, as we know, does not like excessive rainfall, and so that also helped to make failures. But in 1919 the Government declared a policy of no more assistance for light lands. Practically all that is being done on light land to-day is being done by the individual settler with his own cash. No assistance is being

rendered by the Government. I want to deal with that question, because the light land problem in Western Australia is a very important one. It is not that there is one acre in every 21. I have here a report of the Railway Advisory Board, dealing with the extension of the Lake Mollerin railway to serve 896,000 acres, of which 250,000 acres is first class forest land, and 246,430 acres has been selected. In every district in the eastern portion of my electorate the thing applies, just as it does in any other district. There is an average of one acre of first class land to every acre of second or third class land. But in certain portions of the State we have large areas of second class land. In my opinion the second class lands in the drier portions of the wheat belt will produce, and are producing, better crops than can be raised on the forest country. At Benambury there is held every year a 50-acre cropping competition. Of many competitors last year only two had light land, while at least a dozen had first class land. The first and second prizes both went to crops on land of light quality, land that the Agricultural Bank would not agree to advance a penny upon. In my opinion that is what is increasing our wheat yields, namely, the large areas of light land that are being brought under cultivation. However, it reflects no credit on the department, for these lands have been and are being developed by the individual settlers. We have a light lands experimental farm at Wongan Hills. This year sees its third crop. The Minister seems to have some doubt about these light lands, and to hold the opinion that they are good only while they are new.

The Minister for Lands: No. What I said was that such land must not be exhausted: it must be built up.

Mr. LINDSAY: I know from experience that light land is not much good while it is new land. We require to take three or four crops off it before it gives the best return. But, of course, I agree with the Minister that it must be built up; at all events to the extent that it must be worked in rotation. In order to illustrate my remarks, I propose to give figures dealing with one particular point. I gave them all the other night, but I wish now to enlarge upon them, for they afford definite proof of what area of light land is under crop and what the yield is. On plan 33/80 we find there are 127,547 acres stripped for wheat. In addition, of

course, a large area is cut for hay, oats, and barley, and another large area is under fallow. It is safe to assume from that plan of 600,000 acres that over 300,000 acres are cleared and have been under crop. The area in that plan produces more wheat—it is all in my electorate—than the area of any other plan in the State. It also produces a very high average yield. Yet that plan contains more light land than does any other plan of my electorate, although nothing like one acre in 20; there may be three acres of light land to every acre of forest land. I am illustrating the production for the reason that this is the plan I spoke of in the House before Mr. Bostock was appointed, when I asked that some competent observer should be sent to that district. For there are up there many farmers with nothing but light lands, notwithstanding which they have been farming successfully for the past 10 years or so. I want to show that the great increase in acreage under crop in that district during the last four years or so has been an increase in light lands. Take that area of 600,000 acres. If it was as the "West Australian" says it is, it would be 30,000 acres of first class land, whereas we know that 127,000 acres were stripped for wheat alone and more than 300,000 acres are cleared. I think the department and the bank should be doing more for the development of light land. I have put up many cases to the trustees of the bank. Some of the settlers unfortunately have been refused assistance on the score that they have not 2,000 acres. But those men have been farmers or farm hands for years, and are really good men. Although a great area of light land has been taken up in the northern part of my electorate, unless assistance is given to those men they cannot continue to carry out improvements. Most of the men who go on the land in this State are without capital, and they have been taught to expect assistance from the Government. Several men have written to me, but because they did not have 2,000 acres each, notwithstanding that it was second class land, they were not assisted.

The Minister for Lands: It is not a sound proposition.

Mr. LINDSAY: It is remarkable that in Western Australia we require a settler to have more land than would be required in any other place in the world. I do not know why that should be. That is another idea in people's minds when they say that the Western Australian land is not so good as

land in other countries. I do not agree with that. I had an experience in Victoria in February of last year. I was inquiring into the light land problem and was taken to Manangatang to a farmers' conference, of which they made me chairman. I travelled some 200 miles through that country in a motor car, and I am prepared to say that in Western Australia we have very little land as bad as that I saw in that northern mallee country of Victoria. And what did the settlers at the conference ask for? This question of area of land was discussed, and they asked that the holdings should be increased to 800 acres. Most of them had 640 acres. I lived amongst them for three days, talked to them, saw their farms, examined the land, and I say unhesitatingly that except for our wodjil country, or perhaps our yellow sandplain, our land, even our huge acres of solid sandplain, are better than what I saw in Northern Victoria. The Minister for Lands talked of the mallee country and referred to the difficulty of suckering.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. LINDSAY: Before tea I was dealing with the interjection of the Minister for Lands with regard to the size of farms. I was referring to the areas I had found when I visited Victoria. A conference I attended there asked that the size of farms be increased to 800 acres. I have referred to this matter before, because it seems to me important. Unfortunately, however, other members have not taken the interest in it that I have. One of the reasons why I brought up the question is the policy of the Agricultural Bank in declining to advance money unless a settler has 2,000 acres of second class land. In many cases this leads to forcing Industries Assistance Board settlers or soldier settlers to take up 2,000 acres of good forest country. I believe that a good deal of the lands of the State have been developed in spite of Government departments, and without assistance from them. We are not receiving the assistance in the development of the land that we are entitled to. We have now reached the stage when a man is forced to select 2,000 acres in order to get an Agricultural Bank advance. That area is not a one-man holding. Our great problem in the early days of settlement was to find sufficient money with which to develop our land. If we are obliged to hold

a lot of surplus land, we must find the wherewithal to pay land tax, road board rates and devote the necessary time and labour to cope with the rabbits. Undeveloped land is always a menace to the owner as well as a deterrent to his progress. Not many men in Western Australia have been able to develop 2,000 acres in less than 15 or 20 years. A man cannot develop his holding much under £4 an acre in the case of first class land. It may be possible to develop light lands for £3 an acre, but it cannot be done under £4 in forest country. When we say that a man must take up not less than 2,000 acres of land, we are forcing him to become a capitalist. The Agricultural Bank should be available to persons who have holdings of a reasonable size. It should not be the means of forcing them to take up too much land, for in such a case it is harmful to the settler. When he has too much land he cannot do a fair thing by any of it. This means that we are keeping the country back, because it takes too long to develop a big holding.

The Minister for Lands: This year I saw a farm where 1,000 acres were under wheat for the first time.

Mr. LINDSAY: That man may have had a lot of capital of his own. The average man that is going on the land has little or nothing, and has to be assisted. I know of one man who took up land only 18 months ago, but he now has 2,000 acres under crop and 4,000 acres under fallow. That is on despised light land. In every part of the world land gets back into big holdings quickly enough without the Government forcing the people to take up large areas. In my own district during the last ten years the average holdings have increased considerably in size. At Bencubbin ten years ago the average holding was 1,560, and to-day it is 1,713 acres. In the early days of the settlement at Wyalcatchem the settlers did not take up so much land, but in 1915 the average holding was 1,073 acres, and to-day it is 1,453 acres. One of the reasons why I went to Victoria was to make inquiries into the light lands question. At the conference there I met farmers who were settled on land in the mallee country no better than our third class land, and they were asking for the areas to be increased to 800 acres. These men ought to have known something about the question because they had been settled there for a long time.

The Premier: Do you say that the mallee country is no better than our third class land?

Mr. LINDSAY: I am alluding to the northern mallee lands on the South Australian border.

The Minister for Lands: I saw mallee lands in Victoria that were superior to our sandplain country.

Mr. LINDSAY: I am giving my own views, as I am entitled to do. The land at Murrumbidgee was no better than the light lands in this State.

The Premier: Of what size are the holdings there?

Mr. LINDSAY: About 800 acres. The wheat yield there proves what the land is like.

Mr. Latham: Recently they have made two holdings out of three.

Mr. LINDSAY: Before I visited those mallee lands with the Superintendent of Agriculture I ascertained the rainfall records for that part of the State. There had been rain some 60 miles out from Murrumbidgee, notwithstanding which the Government records showed that the rainfall was only a little over 10 inches, and the men were expected to make a success on that. I do not say all the mallee lands in Victoria are of that class, for there is some country around Mildura that is very much better. When I got to Murrumbidgee on the South Australian border I could not see anything that could be classed with a lot of our third class land. I have also particulars dealing with the average area of farms in the United States, where wheat is grown. In North Dakota, where the farms are of the largest size in the United States, the average wheat yield for the last ten years has not been more than 9.10 bushels, and the farms work out at 449 acres apiece. In Texas, Nebraska and further south the average area held by each man is under 300 acres, and the average wheat yield for the United States as a whole is 13.8 bushels. We have overdone things in this State. No doubt people all want to get as much land as they can, because it will become valuable in time and the holders will be able to get some profit out of it. More men have been settled in Western Australia on big areas of land than on smaller areas of bad land. Only one Government official in this State has made any public announcement on the question, and that is the Surveyor General. Dealing with the lands around Southern Cross he said that in his

opinion second class land will produce crops equal to the first class land in that district. In my own district last year there were 50,000 acres of light land under crop. In the Bencubbin district the Agricultural Department had some experimental plots on Basil Hopwood's farm. These have been worked for seven or eight years. The experimental plots last year averaged 21 bushels to the acre. That is the kind of land on which the Agricultural Bank declined to advance money. Huge areas of that type of land are held in these districts, but if the settlers cannot get assistance, the blocks will have to be abandoned. There are five cases in my own district of persons who have asked me to help them to get advances for the development of their 2,000-acre holdings but it is impossible to get the assistance required.

The Minister for Lands: Adjoining me there are 100,000 acres of sandplain for which no assistance can be obtained.

Mr. LINDSAY: I am dealing generally with the light lands of the State. I am not asking that full advances should be given on country of this kind. When forest country is cleared, it remains cleared, and if it is abandoned some one else will take it up without loss to the State. If light land is abandoned, the scrub grows up again and a good deal of money must be spent to bring it into order again. It is right we should be careful about light lands. In my district there are many soldier settlers. I am now dealing with forest country. I visited the district last week, and have reason to believe that the yields will be higher than they have ever yet been. Every settler who is harvesting his crop has received a good deal more wheat than he estimated. In the eastern portion of the district some returned soldiers have not fared so well. For some years they have been receiving assistance from the I.A.B. They have usually obtained £2 a week. Upon that sum it is hard enough for them to carry on, but they have struggled along. They are really working on contract, because they must do a certain amount of work before they can get the sustenance. These men have been placed in very serious difficulty because they cannot get enough food for themselves and their families. We have been told that certain things have happened in connection with the I.A.B. When the sustenance is reduced to 6s. 8d. a day and a man is expected to keep his wife and family on

that, it is enough to cause them to be dishonest. Men are not likely to go short of stores. The time has arrived when the I.A.B. should give more consideration to these settlers. I have for some time been trying to get an increase. If a settler is not worth 9s. a day, and cannot get enough food for himself and his family, it is not worth while keeping him on a farm. I understand that very few civilian settlers are left on the board.

The Minister for Lands: People cannot expect to go on for ever and ever as clients of the board.

Mr. LINDSAY: I admit that some settlers should not have been allowed to remain on the board as long as they have. I am referring at this juncture to soldier settlers.

The Minister for Lands: It was to help the soldier settlers that the board was continued.

Mr. LINDSAY: I agree that one of the reasons why those settlers are in their present position is the assistance they have received from the board. I have often said that if settlers had been assisted to farm their holdings in the right way, they would have been in a far better position than they occupy to-day. There has been too much in the way of scratching in crops because of shortage of money. It is remarkable to see wheat that is growing in the drier areas of the wheat belt. I hope that settlers who have prospects of a fine yield this year from crops that have only been scratched in will not adopt the attitude that because of this they are always going to get 20-bushel yields. The methods followed by farmers in working our wheat lands have done more to condemn them than anything else. The Agricultural Department have been experimenting all over the State, and particularly on light lands, and have published in the "Agricultural Gazette" the results obtained from the experimental plots, which results have been most successful. That information ought to have sufficed to induce the Agricultural Bank to grant a little additional assistance.

The Minister for Lands: The Agricultural Bank is an excellent institution.

Mr. LINDSAY: I agree, and will say it is marvellous that after so many years' existence of the bank its losses should be comparatively so slight. The Minister recently tabled information regarding amounts written off on soldier settlement.

The Minister for Lands: Would it not be a change to hear from you sometime a good word about the Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board?

Mr. LINDSAY: While the bank has done good work, it has made some mistakes; and as an agricultural member I consider I am entitled to mention those mistakes here. I freely acknowledge that the bank has helped to make possible Western Australia's wheat yield of to-day. In such a big institution, however, some things are bound to be done that should not be done. On the light lands question I have been hammering away here for years. In 1919 our wheat yield was 19 million bushels, whereas last year it was 30 millions; and undoubtedly many of those extra millions of bushels have been grown on light land, which formerly was condemned by everybody in the State.

Mr. Mann: You are a trifle wide in saying "everybody."

Mr. LINDSAY: One of my objections to departmental officials is that they take a long time to decide on a policy—as was the case in 1919—and that, no matter what the farmers prove to them, the departmental policy is not altered. A case in point is the proof given by farmers that the light lands are good. That proof has not induced either the Agricultural Bank or the Agricultural Department to vary their attitude. I happen to have here a list of amounts written off in connection with soldier settlement. It proves that Western Australia has done a great deal better in that respect than any other State.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is easily explained.

Mr. LINDSAY: Yes; our lands are cheaper, and moreover we had Crown lands available. There have been re-valuations of repatriation properties, and the Minister's figures show that an amount of £206,363 was lost on 118 settlers in the Perth and Bunbury districts, whereas on 79 repatriation properties re-valued on the wheat belt the total written off amounted to only £47,565. Probably a million or two has been invested in the wheat belt on repatriation, and yet only some £47,000 has been written off. As money is available for writing off, it is evident that most of the soldier settlers have received a fair deal. In odd cases, however, settlers, no matter how good their land, have a run of bad luck.

The Minister for Agriculture: I know of men who had bad luck for ten years in succession. With some it is always bad luck.

Mr. LINDSAY: I know of soldier settlers who have taken over properties from other soldier settlers with a big load of debt, which is rather more than the new settlers can bear. They have made applications for re-valuation, but unsuccessfully. The Minister remarked that I had nothing good to say about the Agricultural Bank. I acknowledge that I have always been treated fairly by the Agricultural Bank when approaching that institution, though I have had many cases to go there with. I may add I have been long enough in Parliament to know that no man can be a judge in his own case, and that a request which looks excellent on paper as put up to me, often turns out, when I go to the bank, to be one in which the settler is wrong and the institution is right. I dealt with a certain article published in the "West Australian." One would have thought that such a newspaper, especially when publishing a leading article, would find out the facts before giving publicity to such terrible statements concerning Western Australia. Some years ago I was a member of the Royal Commission on group settlement, and that Commission had evidence to show, and reported, that the light lands of the South-West were unsuitable for group settlement. Because we dared to make that awful statement, the "West Australian" condemned us as pessimists and croakers.

Member: Was that the majority report?

Mr. LINDSAY: Four members signed it. On the 28th October last the "West Australian" published that far more damaging statement to which I have replied to-night. It is agreed on all hands, I believe, that progress in Western Australia, particularly on the wheat belt, will be far more rapid henceforth than it has been in the past, provided the seasons are good. Remarks of this nature are generally qualified by a proviso to the effect that the price of wheat must remain good. But the price of wheat is not good. It is low as compared with prices of all other commodities. The index figures of cost of living in Western Australia show that the present cost is 71 per cent. higher than that of 1913. The wholesale prices of all commodities, according to the "Commonwealth Year Book,"

are 81 per cent. higher now than they were in 1913.

Mr. Sleeman: What is the price of bread?

Mr. LINDSAY: The price of bread has very little to do with the price of wheat. In a 6d. loaf the wheat does not represent much more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. What causes the price of bread to rise is such factors as high shop rents, wages, and industrial conditions. Speaking on the Address-in-reply I gave the House some figures as to South Australian prices of wheat, pre-war and post-war. According to "Rural Problems of South Australia," written by Professor Perkins, the price of wheat in South Australia has gone up 36 per cent. as compared with the pre-war figure. I know of no commodity used by the wheat grower that has risen so little in price. According to Professor Perkins, the only factor that enabled wheat growers to continue was the greater return per acre and per man. With the advent of big machinery the cost of production has been cheapened. When people speak about the price of wheat, they seem to do so under the impression that other countries will produce wheat more cheaply than Australia; but American and Canadian figures show that it is not possible to produce wheat in North America at the price ruling here to-day. Generally speaking, wheat growing returns a profit to-day; but the price of wheat is not good in other countries, which, in fact, are producing wheat at a loss. The reason for our position is partly our excellent climatic conditions. Here is a quotation from the "United States Year Book of Agriculture" for 1924—

While industry was booming, agriculture sank to lower and lower levels of depression. With the break in prices in 1920 and the depression that followed, difficulties loomed up for the farmers, debts contracted at war prices could be paid from shrunken incomes only with difficulty, thousands of farmers failed, and banks toppled by the hundred, with the result that Government funds had to be provided to meet the emergency.

We are told wages are very high in America. In this Chamber it has been stated that our farmers do not pay such wages as they ought to pay. Now let me quote the wages of American farm workers. The average for 1924 with board was 35s. per week, and without board approximately £2 10s. per week. That is a great deal less than the Western Australian farmer pays. The difference is accounted for by the extreme depression in the United States, which prevents the payment of reasonable wages.

The Minister for Mines: And yet Australia sends Royal Commissions to the United States to find out how that country manages to pay such high wages!

Mr. LINDSAY: My reference is to agricultural wages, not industrial wages. The reason for the bad position of American agriculture is to be found in the rise of the manufacturing industries. Taxation has not been removed from agriculture as it ought to have been. I could go on to show the Committee the special reason for that. It is one of the things we must look to in Western Australia. While other Australian industries are receiving proper prices for their commodities, the Australian agriculturist has to depend on the world's market. I am one of those who believe that Western Australia still has many millions of acres of wheat lands to develop. Therefore Parliament has the right to hear our views voiced if we know anything of the subject. Posterity will judge us by the way in which we use our natural resources, and therefore I claim the right to speak here on agricultural questions. In conclusion I heartily congratulate the Minister for Lands on having had such a pleasing story to tell.

MR. GRIFFITHS (Avon) [7.58]: On a recent evening the Leader of the Opposition spoke about the area of land made available for our own young Western Australians. He was somewhat doubtful as to what the Minister for Lands had stated. Probably the position would be made clear to members interested if I briefly alluded to what was stated by Mr. Gepp, of the Development and Migration Commission, in an article published recently—

Development means immigration. The whole conception of the establishment of a Commission was the establishment of a system by which a survey of the resources of the Commonwealth could be made, and their development hastened along economic lines. Its work embraces the investigation of the condition and development of existing industries, whether primary or secondary, and of the possibility of establishing new industries.

Now comes the part I wish to emphasise—

Supervision of migration, equal opportunity for advancement for the British migrant and for the native-born. As Australia grows, immigration will automatically increase. To assist the necessary development an agreement has been entered into between the British and Commonwealth Governments, and subsidiary agreements between the Commonwealth Government and the Governments of the States, for the expenditure of £84,000,000. Broadly these various agreements provide that loan

moneys up to the amount stated will be provided at an interest cost to the States of 1½ per cent. per annum over a period of ten years for work of a reproductive character, for the furtherance of land settlement, the extension of railway or road services, and the creation of water supplies or development, by means of public works, of Australia's dormant wealth.

I quote that, because I have in my possession nine applications from young fellows in this State who desire to secure land and want to know the best way to go about it. They say they have put in application after application but that their efforts have been abortive. The information I received a little while ago was that areas in the Forrestania, North Bencubbin, Lake King, Lake Carmody, Lake Magenta and the Damposa districts were to be opened up and that 45 surveyors were at work.

Mr. Latham: Forty-five surveyors!

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I do not know whether that is the correct number, but that was the statement that was published.

The Minister for Lands: We have at present the largest staff of surveyors that we have had for many years.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: How many are on the staff?

The Minister for Lands: There are 52 surveyors at present.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The Minister has indicated his intention of throwing open something like a thousand blocks. The young men I have referred to are drawn from all walks of life and include a schoolmaster, an ex-surveyor, a grocer and an ex-minister of religion, and I am writing to inform them of the position. It was pleasing to hear the Minister state that the work of the surveyors was progressing actively. The Surveyor General's report indicates that a good deal of the work is in hand and that in all probability in the near future we shall hear something to the advantage of our own young Australians. The prevailing impression is that the land that is being opened up with the aid of financial assistance from the Old Country is to be made available almost entirely to migrants.

The Minister for Lands: I gave you the figures the other evening.

[Mr. Lambert took the Chair.]

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The article I referred to sets out that equal opportunities were to be given to the migrant as to the native born, but the Minister's figures were an im-

provement and indicated that our own people were to have the preponderating number of the blocks. When discussing the Lake Brown railway proposal some time ago I spoke about the large holdings that were being surveyed in the areas through which the railway was to proceed. The position I indicated then is turning out to be as I forecasted. On the two sheets covering the areas concerned there are 51 blocks on each, and of these there are 12 in respect of which no assistance can be secured from the Agricultural Bank although those blocks are close to where the railway is to run. One of the reasons advanced by the bank for not giving assistance is that while there is sufficient first-class land included in those blocks it is so scattered that the holdings are not economic propositions. Location 362 comprises 3,763 acres. In fact, the smallest block contains 2,431 acres while the largest contains 4,905 acres. For instance, Block 399 contains 4,763 acres, while Block 396 contains 4,847 acres. Taking the whole lot, however, they contain 45,971 acres and yet no assistance can be obtained from the bank for the development of that area. According to the "Sunday Times," Locations 291, 293, 294, 311, and 320 have been forfeited. Three of those blocks contain over 4,000 acres, the largest one containing 4,517, while the remaining two contain 3,357 acres and 3,813 acres respectively. The members of the Westonia Road Board have been concerned about the position and communicated with me. I sent a copy of the letter to the department and asked, in no carping spirit, if something could not be done to place the people concerned in a position that would enable them to do something with their holdings. In the letter I received from the Westonia Road Board there is the following:-

Several and bitter complaints have been made to me, of the lack of co-ordination between the Lands Department and the Agricultural Bank authorities, with disastrous results to the finances of the individual settlers. The Westonia Road Board are in possession of a letter from the Lands Department, assuring them that land thrown open for selection, would be surveyed large enough and with a sufficiency of first class land to insure the holder receiving a loan. In several instances successful applicants have been forced on to their holdings (on the paid on forfeiture) only to find after they have spent more or less of their own money on improvements, that the Agricultural Bank declines to assist them. This applies to Locations 362, 3,763 acres; 337, 2,483 acres; 310, 2,431 acres, while Locations 370, 4,721 acres; 371, 4,905 acres;

377, 3,675 acres; 378, 2,837 acres; 372, 4,248 acres; 374, 3,963 acres; 396, 4,847 acres; 399, 4,763 acres; 400, 4,330 acres, are, or were, all open for selection, but as the Agricultural Bank declines to say if these vacant locations will carry a loan until prospective land owners take up the blocks and lodge an application for a loan with one per cent. of amount applied for—therefore, people are not anxious to select, and mind you, all the locations quoted lay right on the route of and/or are to be served by the Lake Brown-Bullfinch Railway and legislators were told what good land the route traversed when the Bill was before Parliament. It now looks as if this railway will traverse miles of half occupied country.

This is no good to anyone and I trust the Agricultural Bank and Lands Department and the Ministers controlling the departments may amend their policy to the good of our district. I have written to the trustees of the Agricultural Bank and have pointed out the position of the people in the north-eastern portions of the district. I have received a reply setting out that there is no lack of co-ordination and that everything is all right. I am placing this matter before the Minister in the hope that something may be done to bring the land affected under the plough. The blocks are extraordinarily large, but they had to be cut up in that way so as to contain the requisite proportion of first-class land. Although the blocks are close to where the railway line will run, no advances can be made, and five blocks have been forfeited already. I look for the support of the member for Yilgarn (Mr. Corboy), because I believe he has received communications about this difficulty. These people are on the border line of my electorate, and although the line will be outside my electorate many of my constituents will have to use the railway. The speech delivered by the member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) served as an introduction to this question of large holdings. The other evening the Minister spoke about the boosting of land values, and I can speak feelingly on that question. I have relations on the land who have written to me about the increases in their valuations. Those increases are pinching them. The boosting of land values, as the Minister indicated, led to the creation of the Paterson butter scheme and the encouragement of various means of assistance to industries. Regarding the Industries Assistance Board and the Agricultural Bank, I wish to support the remarks of the member for Toodyay. Although I have had some differences with the members of the Industries Assistance Board, generally speaking I have to admit that in the major-

ity of instances their judgment was correct. The board members have information that members of Parliament are not always able to secure and, as the member for Toodyay said, we cannot always get the other side of the story. I hope every opportunity will be given us to deal with the question of soldier settlement. I have already moved a motion dealing with that matter, and I do not wish to cover the ground again. Soldiers were placed in the land and were given distinct promises, and I think those promises should be honoured, particularly as Federal money is involved. I want to know what the position really is regarding the soldier settlers at Quellagetting, and I shall have something further to say about that at a later stage.

The Minister for Lands: What do those soldier settlers complain about?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: They have had to cart over 20 miles to a railway, and the added costs now mean that their position is economically impossible. Federal as well as State money is involved, and I have moved a motion for the tabling of a return that will enable us to say exactly what the position is. As to the question of the economic limit for wheat growing and the distance of holdings from railways, I shall have something further to say when dealing with the Agricultural Vote. It is ridiculous to say that the economic distance is the same as before the war. They say that the economic conditions have improved and that a man can afford to add five miles to his carting, which means 10 miles altogether, to his cost of production. I shall have something further to say on that at a later stage, but will not take up any more time of the Committee at present.

MR. LATHAM (York) [8.15]: Western Australia to-day is in a very fortunate position, and I suppose the Minister anticipates very little trouble with his Estimates. I do not know whether I am right in tendering advice on this matter, but I believe the Government expect to throw open a large area of country lying south of the Eastern Goldfields line. What I am going to advocate has repeatedly been urged in this House. The Minister said he has a number of surveyors doing classification work there. The proper thing is to classify the country first, run the railway surveys next, and then mark out the various blocks. In the past our land settlement has been topsy-turvy, higgledy-piggledy, all over the place. If we are go-

ing to open up all that country, let us have the classification, then run out the railway surveys and arrange the proposed sidings, as well as roads, and afterwards survey the blocks. In that way a large area can be more easily dealt with and at less expense, and there will not be that heart-burning about railway construction that we so repeatedly hear of in this House. I believe I have heard the Minister express similar views and I hope he will adopt that method when dealing with that land. It is necessary to wait in order to make available land for all the people who desire it. I only wish we could satisfy the people within the State who want land, but we shall have to exercise patience before that can be accomplished. The member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) expressed an opinion about farming light land. I endorse the action taken by the Agricultural Bank in the matter of advancing money on light lands. Such land does not offer the security that forest country does, and I venture to say that if we classified the farmers other than soldiers, and even many of the soldiers, at present on the Industries Assistance Board, it would be found that most of them were on light land. Of course there are isolated instances of misfits, as in other walks of life. Still, I hope the Minister will not interfere with the discretionary power of the bank trustees as regards making advances on light country. The experiment of 1911-12 was a painful one. While I wish to see the light land used, I think it can best be handled by farmers and sons of farmers who have had experience in this State. To throw open areas in large blocks as the member for Toodyay proposed will, I fear, lead to a calamity similar to that of 16 years ago.

Mr. Kennedy: What sized blocks would you suggest?

Mr. LATHAM: From 2,000 to 2,500 acres. Generally speaking, a thousand acres of land is quite enough for any farmer, though I do not say he should not have a larger area. In light country, however, it is essential to farm a larger area. If it is possible to make a success on 300 acres of forest country, it is necessary to have 600 acres of light country.

The Minister for Lands: And you must not exhaust light country.

Mr. LATHAM: No, it must not be cropped so frequently as the heavier country. If we restrict light land farms to an area of 1,000 acres, we shall soon find our-

selves in difficulties. I think the Minister's views on the light country coincide with mine. While the member for Toodyay may have good reasons for his statement, I cannot help thinking that he must have in mind better country than I have.

Mr. Kennedy: He is a good farmer.

Mr. LATHAM: I have every reason to believe he is a good farmer, but I know many good farmers who have tried to make a success on light country and have failed.

The Minister for Lands: The member for Toodyay is not farming light country.

Mr. LATHAM: No. The trustees of the Agricultural Bank have been wise in insisting upon a farmer having 600 acres of first class land. A farmer should start his operations on forest country and tackle the light country afterwards. I only wish we could give to farmers who have 1,000 acres of forest country an equal area of light land, but it is impossible to do that. If we could do it, we should be producing more wheat. I think the average yield for the light country is 12 bushels, but I cannot help thinking that if a man gets 12 bushels he is doing well. Twelve bushels at 5s. a bushel represents a return of £3 per acre, and the report recently tabled showed that it cost £2 4s. 3d. per acre to produce and market it. Consequently, not a great margin is left for additional improvements. I am not keen to see our land values built up disproportionate to the producing capacity of the land. When I was in the Eastern States recently I was amazed to find what high valuations had been placed on some of the land. If the Eastern States get another season as bad as the one experienced this year, their financial position will be serious, largely owing to the over-valuation of the land. Of course, a certain valuation must be built up here, but if we are careful to use only the best land within the assured line of rainfall, we shall be on a pretty good wicket. I suppose most representatives of country districts have a complaint of some kind or other. I have one regarding the attitude of the Government to the employment of southern Europeans for clearing work. It has been stated repeatedly in this House that southern Europeans are employed because theirs is cheap labour.

Mr. Sleeman: That is pretty right, too, in most instances.

Hon. G. Taylor: It does not always apply.

Mr. LATHAM: The member for Fremantle cannot refrain from making inter-

jections of that kind. I suggest that he interviews the trustees of the Agricultural Bank, than whom no better judges can be found. If they advise the Minister that any of their clients are getting their clearing done more cheaply by using southern European labour, I shall be very much surprised.

The Minister for Lands: The Agricultural Bank do not pay them; they give the settler the money.

Mr. LATHAM: The Agricultural Bank know what it costs per acre to do the clearing.

The Minister for Lands: No.

Mr. LATHAM: I am satisfied that they do.

The Minister for Lands: The Agricultural Bank make the advance.

Mr. LATHAM: And they fix the price per acre.

The Minister for Lands: The Agricultural Bank make the advance and the settler makes what arrangements he likes.

Mr. LATHAM: I have enjoyed the benefit of an Agricultural Bank advance and I know their methods from A to Z.

The Minister for Lands: Not better than I do.

Mr. LATHAM: I claim to know them equally as well as the Minister. They have always asked, "What are you paying for that work?" and frequently I have had to pay more than the bank would advance to get the work done.

The Minister for Lands: They have never asked me.

Mr. LATHAM: I am not sure that the Minister gets assistance from the Agricultural Bank.

The Minister for Lands: I did get it.

Mr. LATHAM: At one time, perhaps, and if the Minister carries his memory back he may recollect that he was asked.

The Minister for Mines: Even if they did ask, he would give the price of the contract.

Hon. G. Taylor: He never let clearing by contract. His was all done by day labour.

Mr. LATHAM: Southern Europeans do not undertake clearing more cheaply than our own men. While we should find work for our own people first of all, if they are not offering for the work we should not hang up the development of the country on that account.

The Minister for Lands: That is the position.

Mr. LATHAM: I believe the Minister has issued a very definite instruction to the

Agricultural Bank trustees that they are not to make advances to settlers employing southern European labour.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is so.

Mr. LATHAM: I have been told by the officials themselves, when I inquired what the settlers were to do, "It is more than my job is worth because I am liable to be dismissed instantly if I do not carry out the instructions."

Hon. G. Taylor: The tyranny of democracy!

Mr. LATHAM: Let me make it plain that they did not say the instructions came from the Minister, but it is clear that either the bank trustees have instructed the officials, or the Minister has instructed the bank trustees to that effect. If Australian labour is available we ought to use it, but if it is not we have no right to hang up the development of the country on that account. The only work that southern Europeans are doing, I think, is axe work. I do not know whether any are engaged on road construction, but while they are here we should not deny them employment. During a visit to the east end of my electorate last week end I was surprised to find some southern Europeans walking about the roads who told me they could not get food to eat. It is true that such men send a lot of their money to their homeland instead of keeping a reserve fund for their own use.

Mr. Sleeman: It would be a pretty hard job for them to get a reserve fund.

Mr. LATHAM: A good deal of the money earned by those people is sent to foreign countries.

Hon. G. Taylor: They are married men and they send it away to keep their families.

Mr. LATHAM: That is so.

Mr. Davy: How can you justify differentiating between citizens living in this country?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You would not call them citizens if they are not naturalised?

Mr. Davy: They come here and apparently they are denied the right to work.

Mr. LATHAM: They are not naturalised British subjects, and it is a wise nation that looks after its own people first of all. At the same time the southern Europeans have been permitted to come here and we should give them an opportunity to work, particularly when other labour is not forthcoming. I told the settlers definitely that if they could not get anyone else to do the work, I would take the bull by the horns and see that the work was done. I do not think the Minister

or anyone else would rule that the money should not be advanced in such circumstances. It is not a question of the bank paying the money to southern Europeans. The advances are being made to our own people on thoroughly good security. They have to pay interest on the money advanced and repay the loan to the bank. I hope the Minister will exercise discretion in the matter and see that the development of the State is not hampered. I am speaking now of the edge of settlement 20 miles or more from railways. The bank trustees are advancing up to 75 per cent. of the money on holdings 22 miles out. The bank officials told the settlers they ought to do the work themselves, but it is impossible for settlers to do additional clearing and at the same time carry on their farming operations.

The Minister for Lands: You did your own clearing.

Mr. LATHAM: On the first 300 acres only. Once I had 300 acres cleared, by the time I did my own fencing and attended to other work, there was little time left to tackle additional clearing. The Minister is advocating the wise policy of following. While a settler is putting his first 300 acres under crop and erecting fences, he can, by obtaining an advance, get another 300 acres cleared, and when that is done all his time is occupied in farming and he has no time to undertake additional clearing work. With regard to the Agricultural Bank, the officials are rendering wonderfully good service to the State. Very often I come along with a proposal and they tell me definitely that if I can get the Government to announce their railway policy, the bank will then be prepared to back the settlers wherever there is justification for doing so. But despite the fact that now and again there is a little reason for complaint, generally speaking the bank has proved a wonderful institution. It is the people's money that they are handling, and they must see that they get security for it. With regard to the rabbit question, I am glad to note the manner in which the netting has been expeditiously sent out to the various districts. But for the work that has been done by the department during the past two years, we would have suffered considerable losses in our wheat areas. Not only has the netting been beneficial in keeping the rabbits back, but it has enabled us to increase the area under cultivation. It is very satisfactory to know that we are enjoying such a good season, and I hope the next time the Min-

ister comes along with his Estimates, we shall have been able to satisfy those people who are clamouring for land and who at the present time are not able to get it. I trust that the suggestion I put forward regarding the land south of the goldfields line will receive consideration. I do not think we should have a railway service before we cut up our land into blocks.

MR. KENNEDY (Greenough) [8.33]: I desire to offer a few remarks on the land Estimates. There is no doubt that the prosperity of the State at the present time is due to the activities of past and present Governments in opening up our wheat-growing land. Though much has been done in the past, there is still a great deal to be done. We have devoted the greater part of our attention to forest country, and large areas of land in this State that a few years ago were deemed unsuitable for wheat growing have now been demonstrated to be capable of producing wheat in great quantities. Since I have been a member of this House I have listened attentively to the member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) and have come to the conclusion that the Toodyay district is similar in many respects to Greenough. Its first and second-class lands were taken up many years ago, and there remain what is termed third-class land, which is also known as light land. Four or five years ago this light land was despised, but at the present time it is being successfully used for wheat-growing. The member for Toodyay has been championing this class of land since he has been in the House, and the Greenough electorate can boast of extensive areas of it that must, at no distant date, be turned to profitable account. I have just concluded a trip through a portion of the Greenough electorate in the company of the Minister for Water Supply, going through the Dartmoor and Balla districts. Here there are wheat-growing areas, 20 to 30 miles from the existing Yuna-Northampton-Ajana railway. Between 15 and 17 years ago this land was surveyed and subdivided into 1,000-acre blocks. The Agricultural Bank at that time was sceptical about advancing money on land so far from a railway. Transport then was slow in comparison with what it is to-day, and for those reasons the areas were not taken up. Then it was decided to throw open the land in blocks of 4,000 and 5,000 acres, and all has now been taken up. The sons of farmers in that part of the State who desire to set out for themselves have

taken up most of that country and they promise to do very well. In the Dartmoor area the pioneer settler was Mr. Olivier. In his first year he cropped 106 acres, roughly put in, and the yield he got was eight bags. This year he has put in 400 acres and the estimate of reliable authorities is that the yield will be in the vicinity of seven or eight bags. Further out there are large areas taken up by the Dartmoor Development Co. They have between 400 and 500 acres under crop which will also yield between seven and eight bags to the acre. I should mention that those pioneers are greatly handicapped because the bank will not advance them money under any conditions with the exception, perhaps, of Mr. Olivier, who has been granted a loan to test the country. There are other settlers further out who badly need the bank's assistance. All who have gone out have pioneered the district without any aid from the bank, and have carried on operations under great difficulties. The water supplies have been negligible in comparison with those in other wheat-growing areas of the State. It has been decided, however, that boring shall be carried on shortly, and it is confidently hoped that a good supply will be forthcoming. It has also been necessary to make roads, and one allocation has been made to them from the Federal aid roads grant. That has assisted them considerably, but there is still much road work to be put in hand. Further out again to the west of Dartmoor there is another wheat province known as Balla, which is somewhat similar to Dartmoor. This was thrown open some years ago, but being far removed from a railway, and transport facilities being non-existent, it was not taken up. Now, however, there is such a clamour for land that every block in the area has been selected. The people in this locality are better situated than are those at Dartmoor in respect of water supplies. A site has been selected for a concrete tank and the work will be put in hand at an early date. Again in this area the pioneer settlers are not receiving any assistance from the bank. I trust the Minister will advise the trustees of the bank to again consider the question of granting help to the hard struggling pioneers in those parts.

Hon. G. Taylor: You do not expect the Minister to instruct the trustees, do you?

Mr. KENNEDY: Perhaps not altogether instruct the trustees. I hope, however, he

will see to it that some assistance is rendered to these people. We do not want the Minister to remain a figurehead altogether.

The Minister for Lands: The Minister has instructions, you know.

Mr. KENNEDY: I might also mention that north of Balla and Dartmoor there is a large area of unsurveyed land which, in the opinion of expert farmers, is capable of growing wheat. The rainfall there is certain. There were doubts in the past about the rainfall but in comparison with that at Greenough, the banks of the Murchison River, and Northampton, it might be said to be assured. The area suitable for wheat growing is very large and hundreds of farmers' sons in the Greenough electorate would be only too eager to take up selections there if the land were surveyed and classified. I am aware that we have a large number of surveyors engaged in the work of surveying and classifying, but if we have not enough we should secure the services of more from other parts of the world. Reverting back to the light lands, it has been proved beyond all doubt that even sandplain country, which was believed to be non-cultivable, is to-day yielding between five and six bags to the acre. I have in mind particularly the sandplain country at Marchagee on the Midland Railway. There is no clearing required there at all. The land is just ploughed and cultivated and from a thousand acres the result should be five or six bags. There is no doubt whatever about our light lands. All that is required is a bold policy, and if we opened up these areas we could accommodate many inquiring settlers. So far back as 1923 there was an agitation for the extension of the Yuna to Mullewa railway. The Railway Advisory Board was asked to report and they did so as follows:—

Outside a 10-mile radius of existing lines there are 36,455 acres of first-class land; 22,977 acres of second-class land; and 225,948 acres of third-class land, making a total of 285,380 acres. Outside the 12½ mile radius of existing lines there are 26,459 acres of first-class land; 15,012 acres of second-class land, and 230,159 acres of third-class land, making a total of 272,530 acres.

The board had also these comments to make—

The best of the land is in the vicinity of the Greenough River and Wandana Flat. Immediately east and west of Wandana Flat the

land is principally sand and scrub plain, while, though the land in the north-eastern portion of the area is of a better class, it is considered to be outside the safe wheat-growing area owing to the uncertain rainfall, and at present is only suitable for grazing, for which purpose it is well adapted.

We have an assured rainfall there and we know that the country is capable of producing wheat. The report states further as shown in another paragraph—

There is a large area of third-class land in the block under review. With proper methods of cultivation, probably half of this area could be profitably developed, and by allocating about 4,000 acres for each unit about 50 additional settlers could be provided for bringing the total number to about 110 and increasing the future production to about 13,200 tons per annum.

Then in conclusion the Board state—

In view of the comparatively small area of first-class land, within the locality to be served, the Board cannot recommend the immediate construction of the railway, but in the event of future development showing that the class of country referred to in a previous paragraph can be profitably farmed in 4,000 acre units, the construction of the line could be favourably considered.

That was as far back as 1923 and we have now proved that this light land is capable of producing wheat and, as recommended by the Railway Advisory Board, if thrown open in 4,000 acre blocks, success will be assured. I suggest that the Government again consider the advisableness of extending the railway from Yuna to Mullewa, and to make a classification of this land. If there should be any doubt about the capacity of the land to produce wheat, there could be established an experimental farm. This could be run in conjunction with the experimental farm at Nabawa. The distance would be only 20 or 30 miles from the present Chapman State farm. If this were done, it would be demonstrated to the people of the State that the construction of the railway was justified. In the Greenough electorate recently several estates that have been lying idle for many years have been bought up by the Government. They are the Merdels estate and the Wungundi estate, and now negotiations have been concluded for the purchase of the Kokatea estate. That will be of great assistance to settlers requiring land, and the subdivision of these estates will mean increased business on the railways and for the port of Geraldton, where a harbour is being built to accommodate the wheat ships. Then let me come

down the Mullewa-Wongan Hills line to Gutha. For many years the large areas of first-class timber country in that district were deemed unsuitable for wheat growing. To-day there is not an acre available within 25 miles of the railway. The only trouble in that district is that the holdings have been cut up into 4,000 and 5,000 acre blocks, the reason being that the bank was doubtful whether settlers would make a success on smaller holdings. However, the settlers all complain that their holdings are too big for economical working. I suggest, and others have suggested also, that a settler would make good on anything between 1,500 and 2,000 acres of that country. There are in the Greenough electorate large areas of light lands, and I hope the trustees of the bank will be asked to make a visit to the district and report on those lands. It has been demonstrated in other parts of the State that light lands are suitable for wheat growing. The rainfall in the district to which I allude is assured, and there are plenty of splendid settlers waiting to take up land in that part of the country. I hope the Minister will give this favourable consideration. The best quality land in the Greenough electorate has all been taken up, because at first it was thought necessary to have excellent forest country for wheat growing. However, that has been disproved by the experimental farms and by the pioneer settlers who went out into the light land areas. I am personally acquainted with this large area of light land in the Greenough electorate, and I recommend to the Minister and the trustees of the Agricultural Bank that they should have the land classified and subdivided and thrown open to settlement at the earliest possible date.

MR. FERGUSON (Moore) [8.48]: I listened carefully to the statements made by the Minister for Lands in introducing his Estimates. The country is to be congratulated on having so practical a man in control of the department. There is no other department upon which the welfare of the State is so largely dependent as that controlled by the Minister for Lands. I want to assure that gentleman that his efforts as political head of the department are meeting with the hearty approval of the country. If the Minister continues as he is doing at present, he will, I am sure, earn the approbation of all sections of the community interested in the welfare of the country.

Mr. Lindsay: Till election day.

Mr. FERGUSON: That will not hurt the Minister. It is a fine thing that we should have so practical a man in control of this department. The Minister referred to the Wongan Hills light lands experimental farm. I was pleased to hear him pay a tribute to the work done on that farm. The Director of Agriculture and the staff employed on the farm are deserving of the thanks of the whole of the agricultural community for the work they have done there. The Minister has told us that experiments on that farm have been responsible for the settling of huge areas of light land in this State. I suggest to the Minister that the Government should do all they can to encourage those who take up these light lands to fence them in with rabbit-proof netting and go in for sheep as early as possible. The light lands will not stand the continuous cropping that heavy lands will, and the selector is likely to reap success more quickly if he gets on to sheep as soon as possible. Of course there are in the way difficulties such as water supply and poison plants, but I am firmly convinced that the sooner the settler on light land gets on to sheep, the sooner will he make good. Unlike the member for York (Mr. Latham), I think the Agricultural Bank should do more to assist the settler on light lands than is being done at present. In the future light lands are going to be responsible for the production of more wheat than are the heavy lands, and it seems to me the Agricultural Bank should assist the settler on light lands to a far greater extent than is being done at present. If those lands are good enough for the State to sell to settlers, they are good enough for the State to back up with financial assistance.

The Minister for Lands: No. The State sells all kinds of land, but does not bind itself to support any man on the land.

Mr. FERGUSON: If it is right for the Government to sell those lands to prospective settlers, they should be prepared to back the settlers.

Mr. Richardson: The settler must take some responsibility.

Mr. FERGUSON: He does, by putting the whole of his labour and capital into the land. The member for York is afraid that if these light lands are forfeited there is a danger of their going back to nature. But agricultural land the world over is too valuable these days for very much of it to be forfeited and not be taken up again. So the State would not be taking very great

risks in assisting to a far greater extent than it does at present to finance those people on light lands. I should like to point out to the Minister that there are in this State areas of light lands other than those to be found in the wheat belt. It is peculiar that where we find a light rainfall we find a better class of light land, and when we get into a heavier rainfall the light land is of poorer quality. To the west of the Midland railway there is a huge area of light land not nearly so good in quality as the light land of the eastern wheatbelt. That light land presents a problem with which the Minister should grapple. I have placed before him a suggestion that he should establish a light lands experimental farm on that country.

Mr. Kennedy: That is the same country as the Marchagee country.

Mr. FERGUSON: Not the same, but it is somewhat similar. The point is that this huge area of about 2,000,000 acres is to-day producing nothing but rabbits and dingoes. It is of no use to the State, nor to the individual farmers settled near it. As time goes on and as the difficulty of finding land for settlers becomes more acute, the Government should take into consideration the doing of something with this huge area of sandplain lying between the Midland railway and the coast. If the Minister could see his way clear to establishing an experimental farm on that country, I believe it would prove that the settler could make a living on it. When that is once proved, the whole of the area of 2,000,000 acres will be rapidly selected. The climate is ideal and the rainfall is the best in the State for mixed farming. The only thing we want is a demonstration that a man can make a living on it. Most of the settlers in that locality have a percentage of this light land in their holdings and are profitably utilising it, but so far nobody has attempted to make a living on this light land exclusively. In the eastern wheat belt farmers can grow wheat on similar land, but in this huge area I speak of wheat cannot profitably be grown. However, the country will grow other produce, and I believe that with the running of sheep a man could make a living on it. If the Minister could see fit to establish a farm and so test that land, it would prove of immense advantage to the State. Mr. Bostock, of the Lands Department, has done a very great deal in the settling of

light lands. He has made an inspection of this country to which I have alluded, and he is of opinion that if the Government were to spend £7,000 or £8,000 on 7,000 or 8,000 acres of that country, it would suffice to demonstrate whether or not a man could make a living on it. As one ever interested in rural development, I always think it a great pity that the development of the South-West should be so slow and should give such disappointing results. However, now that the group settler and the expansion of the dairy industry are doing something to develop the South-West, I point out to the Minister that there are in other parts of the State huge areas where dairying can be profitably carried on. I understand that already a slowing up of migration has been insisted upon because there are not enough blocks on which to put the settlers for dairying purposes.

The Minister for Lands: We have more this year than we had last year.

Mr. FERGUSON: But there are not enough blocks to absorb them. A few miles north of Perth there are large areas of land suitable for dairying. To the north of Wanneroo there are large areas of swamp country, surrounded by second and third-class land, where dairying could be profitably carried on. Further up, along the Moore River, there is an ideal tract for dairying, a strip of country along the river about 20 miles in length by half a mile in width. It is quite ideal for dairying.

Hon. G. Taylor: How far is that away from Perth?

Mr. FERGUSON: From 40 to 50 miles. That country is surrounded by a huge area of light land. That strip along the river is the richest piece of country I have seen in Western Australia. A dairy farmer could make a living on 40 acres or 50 acres of that river flat if he had some of the light land to work in conjunction with it. In addition, there are two large lakes, which in years gone by have had a considerable volume of water in them every wet winter. Recently the Public Works Department spent £1,000 in preventing these lakes from getting the overflow from the river. These lakes are on country similar to the rich Moore River flats I have referred to. They also will carry a good many dairy farmers. Unless something is done with these lakes in the near future it is possible that the scrub and rushes will grow up thickly in them. The lakes have been carrying water nearly every winter, and have been bare

of scrub, but now that the water is kept out of them, being mostly rich and peaty, the soil will quickly produce more vegetation unless the land is cut up and cultivated.

Mr. Mann: What is the area of these lakes?

Mr. FERGUSON: About 2,000 acres. Mr. Surveyor Lefroy of the Lands Department knows this country well. In looking through the file dealing with the matter, I found an extract from a report made by him some years ago. He wrote—

The Moore River flats comprise the finest stretch of rich alluvial country suitable for irrigation in the whole of the South-West portion of the State, where dairying, pig-raising, and stock fattening operations could be undertaken on an extensive scale. Considerable numbers of good swamps for potato growing exist in the district. There is an inexhaustible supply of water within 10 or 12 feet of the surface of the flats which renders their irrigation an inexpensive operation. These flats, if developed with the surrounding strip of country, could support 5,000 head of dairy cattle and tens of thousands of pigs.

I am sure Surveyor Lefroy has a shrewd idea of the value of this land.

Hon. G. Taylor: Is that Crown land?

Mr. FERGUSON: The lakes are Crown land, but the strip of country I refer to is held by eight or ten people, who are willing to place it at the disposal of the Government if the latter will cut it up into suitable blocks for dairying purposes.

Mr. Mann: What would that cost?

Mr. FERGUSON: That would be for the departmental officers to say, though I do not think the expense would be much. The previous Government were fully seized of the value of this country for dairying purposes, and began to build a road to the locality from Gingin through a heavy patch of sand. Upon the advent of the present Government, the Minister for Works put a stop to that, because he said the road was not justified for the eight or ten people who would be served. It is impossible for those people to do anything in the dairy industry without a road, and yet they are not to get a road because they are so few in number. I want the Government to acquire this land, cut it up, and build a road to it. It is ideal country for dairying purposes.

Hon. G. Taylor: To what use is it being put now?

Mr. FERGUSON: It is used for stock. These people are anxious not to stand in

the way of the development of the State, and to place their land at the disposal of the Government at what they consider to be a fair and equitable price. The Minister should purchase this land and cut it up. It must be borne in mind that the Government have already spent £1,000 in preventing the overflow from the river running into these lakes, and it is only necessary to complete the road to render it possible for the present settlers to make use of that country.

Mr. Mann: The Minister may get it under the Closer Settlement Bill.

Mr. FERGUSON: Yes. A river runs through the middle of this locality. At the end of the driest summer there are between 2,000,000 and 3,000,000 gallons of fresh water running to waste every 24 hours. That should be used for irrigation purposes. I know of one settler there who is growing orange trees on a pocket handkerchief block, scarcely any bigger than this Chamber, and yet he sends away a thousand cases of oranges every year. I should like to make reference to the viticultural industry. The Government are not doing enough to encourage people to engage in it. Western Australia is the home of the vine, which flourishes better here than in any other part of Australia. Notwithstanding this, the industry is languishing in Western Australia, but is flourishing in the other States. The Government might do more to help the industry which is of such importance to the State. We have about 5,000 acres under vines at present, but we also have hundreds of thousands of acres suitable for the growth of the vine. It is a pity that something is not done to foster the industry and assist in its development. I would like to show what happens upon an area of 200 acres of vines in the Swan district. In wages alone the proprietors pay no less than £6,000 a year. I do not think any other primary industry in the world pays so much in wages per acre. The average works out at £30 per acre per annum in wages alone.

Mr. Mann: Those people have spent a lot of money in development.

Mr. FERGUSON: And they have taken a long time to develop their property. No fewer than 73 people are kept on the 200 acres. The industry is of great benefit to the State. Extending north from Perth, particularly in the Dandarragan district, there are, I believe, hundreds of thousands of acres of country where the vine will grow just as

well as, if not better than, on the Swan. The land is better, it will grow better crops of grapes, and the grapes are of better quality. One reason why the industry is in such an unsatisfactory condition is that unsuitable men were put into it on the Swan. They were also advised to plant grapes of unsuitable varieties. Had these men been producing wine-making grapes, most of them would have done well. They have, however, devoted most of their energies to unsuitable varieties, with the result that they have not been able to make good. Many of those who have been placed on vine-growing land by the Government have made a failure of the enterprise. Dried fruits also should play an important part in the production of the State. Although producers of dried fruits have had an unsatisfactory time for many years, they are now expecting better things from the marketing legislation that was passed last session. The Minister for Agriculture might do something to assist the dried fruit growers. Some little time ago the Government Tender Board invited tenders for the supply of raisins and currants to Government institutions. Instead of accepting the lowest tender, they accepted none, and recommended that the institutions should purchase dates, which could be had at a cheaper price than Western Australian dried fruits. That was a wrong attitude to take up.

Mr. Mann: Who did that?

Mr. FERGUSON: The Tender Board made this suggestion to the institutions. They lost sight of the fact that 50 per cent. of a date consists of stone, and that the dates are produced by black labour in a foreign country. The raisins and currants, however, are produced in Western Australia, and in quality compare with anything else of the kind in the world. The least we have a right to expect is that the Government shall encourage the consumption of dried fruits in every way.

Mr. Mann: Was the advice of the Tender Board acted upon?

Mr. FERGUSON: I do not know whether after all the institutions bought any raisins or currants, but no tender was accepted by the board.

Hon. G. Taylor: Do you know what price was paid for the dates?

Mr. FERGUSON: No, I only know what the Tender Board did.

Hon. G. Taylor: Were the dates bought?

Mr. FERGUSON: I do not know.

MR. BROWN (Pingelly) [9.10]: I have only the same old tale to unfold, for every member representing an agricultural district holds the same opinion that I do.

Hon. G. Taylor: There are two different opinions with regard to light lands.

Mr. BROWN: No. In our opinion the prosperity of Western Australia is dependent upon the agricultural and pastoral industries. The Government and the State are to be congratulated upon the series of prosperous years we have had. We all rejoice in the fact that Western Australia is going ahead with respect to its pastoral industry, its sheep raising, and its cereals. I hope it will long continue to progress and to enjoy good seasons. If that be so, an exceedingly prosperous time lies ahead of Western Australia. With wise and careful administration we should have the whole of Australia at our feet. We have an assured rainfall and we have the land. Millions of acres of land are not yet taken up. It only requires to be surveyed for hundreds of people to express a willingness to secure it. It behoves the Government to do what they can to encourage people to settle on our land. I know the Minister for Lands is doing what he can in this direction. I am sure he will not mind a little constructive criticism. Every Minister should be open to receive fair criticism. In the Pingelly electorate probably not more than a couple of thousand acres of land, other than rough hills here and there, have not been taken up. I was interested in what the member for Moore said with regard to the quality of our light lands, and the differences that are found in those lands. He is quite right in his assertion. The light lands in the Great Southern are different from those where the rainfall is not so good. In the Great Southern district we have an advantage that others have not. We can prepare our land with topdressing, and after we have had a crop or two we can grow splendid grasses and fodder. Land that was used for sheep was formerly carrying only a sheep to so many acres, but is now able to carry almost a sheep to the acre. We can realise what wealth will come to Western Australia if on these light lands in the Great Southern we can run a sheep to the acre. Subterranean clover requires a certain rainfall to mature and grow at its best. In other parts of the State people have to depend on their natural grasses after the country has been opened up and worked. In the

Great Southern, where we have a rainfall ranging from 25 to 30 inches a year, with topdressing we can cultivate subterranean clover with great success. In fact I have been astonished to find what I thought worthless land carrying a very good crop of subterranean clover. Let me refer to the Agricultural Bank. Western Australia has been settled largely as a result of the advances made by the Agricultural Bank. It is not charity that the settlers have received. The law of the land provides for advances by the Agricultural Bank, and it is good policy for the Government to advance as much as they can with safety for the opening up of our country. If £1,000 or £2,000 is advanced on a selection, the money is not a gift to the settler. He has to pay interest on it and, as success rewards his efforts, he repays the principal.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Interest at 7 per cent., too.

Mr. BROWN: When I had money from the Agricultural Bank I got it for 5 per cent., but like all other banking institutions the Agricultural Bank have raised their interest rate. At the same time the Government cannot borrow money at 4 per cent. as they could years ago. The Government have paid up to 6½ per cent., so that, allowing for the cost of administration, they have had to charge the settlers 7 per cent. Such a high rate is very hard on the settlers. Twenty-five or thirty years ago we had a chance to pick up the best land, and it is possible that some of the settlers are now taking up the poorer land that we rejected. Yet they have to pay the higher rate of interest on money used for its development. The Agricultural Bank has not sustained many losses; in fact, I do not think there has been one total loss. If a man has not succeeded and has abandoned his farm, someone else has been only too willing to take up the holding and make himself responsible for the original debt. That being so, the bank should have no fear about advancing money with discretion on light land. It has been pointed out that we have to look to our light land to increase the production of wheat. Practical men must admit that we have a huge area of light land in Western Australia. In no part of the settled States is there such a large area of light land as we have, but it has been proved that our light land will produce payable crops. That has been proved by the experimental plots at Wongan Hills and also east from Pingelly.

That being so, the Government need have no fear of the results. They can advance money with safety and encourage the settlement of the light land. Only recently have the Agricultural Bank trustees decided to advance on light land. I realise that the bank must be run on commercial lines; otherwise there will be failures. So far there has been no complete failure, because someone is always ready to take up an abandoned holding. It may be a farmer's son or an adjacent farmer who is anxious to acquire it. He is in a position, with the plant he has and backed by the success of his own farm, to work the land properly and make it pay. The Government are receiving hundreds of inquiries for land and hundreds of our own young men are looking for land. Many of them have been disappointed. The policy of the last two or three years—in this I have not agreed with the Government—has been to insist on survey before selection and the department have been able to throw open only a few blocks at a time. Often there have been many applicants for a block, in some instances up to 70. What chance then has a young man to get a block when a man with a family or someone with more money is given the preference? Yilgarn is the district where wheat land is available. A gentleman who has recently been through the district informed me that there are a million acres of land suitable for wheat growing in that district. The Minister says he has 16 surveyors at work and that it is intended to make available at once 1,000 or 1,500 blocks. If they are all surveyed and made available it will be one of the finest things the Government have done. All the men who have been applying for blocks year after year will have an opportunity to get land. On the other hand, if the Government make available only four or five blocks at a time some of the applicants may go on for ever and be unsuccessful in getting a block. I believe the Minister is desirous of settling that land as quickly as possible. It has been said that before people are settled in the eastern areas provision should be made for water. It is wise to provide water, but will it mean delay? Will it mean the holding up of that land for a considerable time? If so, it would be inadvisable. Following the drought season in the Eastern States I assure the Minister that he will have hundreds of inquiries for land from people in the Eastern States, particularly if the estimated yield of wheat here is realised. If Western Aus-

tralia this season heads the whole of the Australian States in wheat production, we shall have many eager inquirers from Eastern States men of money desirous of settling in Western Australia.

Mr. Mann: Hundreds of our own men want land.

Mr. BROWN: Quite so. In the Pingelly district there are young men up to 23 years of age who have been reared on farms and who have repeatedly applied for land and have been disappointed. They are practical young men and if anyone could make a success of farming, they could. They know how to "rough it" and put up with all the inconveniences of pioneering. They are the men to make a success of farming, but they cannot get land. Yet we have millions of acres waiting to be thrown open for selection.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: A good deal of it needs railway facilities.

Mr. BROWN: I do not intend to touch on the railway policy, but I wish to refer to a place where men have been farming for five or six years without railway facilities, namely, the Kalgarin district. Settlement there has extended 40 miles from Kondinin well into the Yilgarn area. I have had letters from people in my electorate 25 miles distant and they have voiced the opinion of people still farther out when they say that unless relief is given them it will be impossible for them to carry on. Most of those farms have been developed with Agricultural Bank money. At the end of last Parliament it was intended to provide a railway to serve the East Kalgarin settlers, but the Bill was withdrawn and the people do not know when they will get a railway. I have been asked to inquire whether the Minister would agree to provide a dump. I do not know whether it would be advisable, but the Minister should give those settlers some assistance in the shape of a subsidy to get their wheat to the nearest railway siding. There is no chance of getting a railway to handle this season's wheat. Motor traffic is the dearest form of transport. The charge in the Kalgarin district is not 1s. per bag, but up to 10d. per bushel.

Mr. Sleeman: For 20 miles?

Mr. BROWN: No, for 35 miles. On that basis it is impossible to make farming pay. If the Minister is requested to provide a subsidy I hope he will give the matter sympathetic consideration. It should be the policy of the Government to subsidise such

farmers to get their wheat to the nearest railway siding.

Mr. Withers: Would they guarantee to have their power kerosene transported by the railways instead of by motor car.

Mr. BROWN: I do not know.

Mr. Withers: They are ready enough to take advantage of cheap freight.

Mr. BROWN: Cheap freight! From Kondinin the wheat has to go to Narrogin and from Narrogin to Perth or Bunbury. Those settlers are many miles from a seaport and they cannot obtain the same returns from their farming as can a man in the York district. A farmer in the York district has a handy market for his produce that settlers farther out have not got. They have only one egg in their basket and that is wheat, whereas farmers in the more settled districts have also sheep to enhance their returns. A farmer in the Pingelly district this year had about 800 sheep shorn and there were fully 200 lambs. The wool, including that of the lambs, averaged 10½ lbs. per head. For the lambs' wool he received 14d. to 18d. per lb., and for the bulk of the fleece wool 23d. Members can judge from those figures what the running of sheep means to that farmer. By obtaining the best strain of sheep he has worked up the average weight of wool from 5lbs. or 6lbs. to 10½ lbs. including the lambs'. That means that some of the big sheep have given 12 to 14 lbs. of wool, and the average price of wool has been 22d. to 23d. per lb. It is an industry that must be fostered. The farmers of the Pingelly district, after 20 years' experience, are in a position to know exactly what will pay them best. They know that a system of mixed farming pays them best. If they cultivate their land once every three or four years they are assured of a good crop and of the ground growing a good coating of grass for the sheep. Consequently they can now make mixed farming pay, whereas they could not do it before.

Mr. Mann: What is the average price of land there?

Mr. BROWN: The best farms bring £5 per acre, but many a farm has been sold for £3 per acre. It is one of the cheapest districts I know of in which to buy land at present. There is a big future before the Pingelly district. Some people, however, are looking for wheat land where they can get yields of eight or ten bags to the acre. I am informed that such yields are being obtained. Many people will not turn their attention to mixed farming as the farmers

of the Pingelly district have done. When a man has had wheat land for a few years he asks £4 or £5 an acre for it. The Agricultural Bank need have no fear in advancing reasonable amounts on land of that kind. The existing state of things has continued for years, and there is not even yet a proper method of cultivation in some districts. For instance, in the gimlet country a plough may not have been used for three or four years; the ground has been simply cultivated in, a process which in the Great Southern district would result in the growth of nothing except grass. If gimlet land will produce 20 bushels per acre with that sort of farming, there is no reason to fear for the future of Western Australia. The million acres in the Forrestania district, towards Lake King and Lake Grace, have an assured rainfall, though I do not know whether local records have been kept; and that country is merely waiting to be developed. If 1,500 blocks were thrown open there, in a week's time every block would be applied for. I do not wish to refer at length to the South-West, though I am rather enthusiastic about it. I do not believe any of the group settlements will be a complete failure. Even the abandoned blocks will be taken up again. Provided clover will grow in that district, three or four blocks can be thrown together, even though a certain amount of capital will have to be written off.

The Minister for Lands: Many of the blocks will be linked up.

Mr. BROWN: In that case the loss will not be great. The necessity for writing down is brought about by the wrong class of people having been put on the blocks. The ground is sour owing to bark and sap sinking into it, and requires sweetening. However, I have no hesitation in saying that eventually the South-West will become the garden of Western Australia. Millions of acres of splendid land in the South-West will repay development, but the development must be slow. Much of the cheap money available to us should have been put into the development of agricultural lands, leaving the South-West to be developed on slow but sure lines. That development will come in time: all we need now is population. Our numbers must expand. The world knows we have a huge acreage available, and people must come here because this is the only country in which land is offering for young men. In the Eastern States the

only possibility is to buy up old estates long cultivated, at big prices; and settlers there are in consequence over-capitalised. Here over-capitalisation will not occur, and any settler with experience is bound to make good. Again, we must foster the dairying industry. Unless we do so we shall never have sufficient butter and cream and other dairy products even for the people of Western Australia. Why is that so? With butter at 2s. per lb., why does not dairying pay? In the wheat lands people will not go in for dairying when they can grow up to 20 bushels of wheat per acre and run sheep producing 8 or 10 lbs. of wool. Such people say, "Why should we slave at dairying when we can make a better living by growing wheat and wool?" However, other parts of Western Australia are open for the development of the dairying industry. We have not yet gone into the heavily timbered lands of the South-West, because there are more lightly timbered lands available. Along the Great Southern railway there are millions of acres eminently suitable for dairying. Like other members, I was only too pleased and gratified to learn that the agricultural and pastoral industries of Western Australia are growing on such sound and solid lines. I sincerely trust that they will continue to do so. Every member of this party will render the Government all possible assistance, because we are only cherishing one hope—the welfare and prosperity of Western Australia.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [9.37]: The increasing volume of the wheat harvest must be a source of great satisfaction not only to the Minister for Lands but to everyone who is even in the slightest degree interested in the welfare of Western Australia. Our area of wheat lands is extending back into something like infinity, and year by year the progress becomes more pronounced and Western Australia's prosperity more assured. The position as presented to-day reveals a fine picture, one that must be seen to be thoroughly appreciated. A visit either to the eastern wheat belt through the Midland country, up the Wongan Hills line, or from Mullewa along towards Geraldton, affords evidence of the wisdom of those who, in the years that have gone, decided that Western Australia had a future as a wheat-growing State. That our future is very bright cannot be denied. The ever-increasing wheat yield, this year

nearly 40,000,000 bushels, postulates a future that may well be the envy of every other State. As a matter of fact, the eyes of Australia are in a special degree focussed upon this State at present; the young men of the East are looking with longing eyes in a westerly direction, their hope being that they will be able either to dispose of the properties they hold or secure sufficient funds to take up land in Western Australia. Because of the splendid land laws of Western Australia and the generosity of the Agricultural Bank, comparatively little money is required to embark on agriculture here; and that factor must materially assist in increasing the prosperity which this State already enjoys. We have heard on different occasions comparisons with respect to the lands of the South-West. Personally I regard it as a great mistake to make comparisons; moreover, it is difficult to draw a useful comparison. When one deals with wheat lands as compared with dairying country, the positions are entirely different, and a true and useful comparison cannot be made. Anyone who knows what is being done in this State to-day can have no doubt as to the ultimate results of the group settlement scheme, and as to the prosperity that will ultimately attend the dairy farmer. In point of fact it is already to an extent enjoyed by him. The results of the South-Western Dairy Company, Ltd., the big butter-producing factory in Bunbury, afford a striking example of what co-operation can provide on the one hand and the dairy country of the South-West can produce on the other. To-day the Bridgetown show was held, and I venture the opinion that those who attended it admired the splendid dairy exhibits. Again, at Manjimup the progress in dairying should afford, and does afford, a complete answer to those in doubt regarding the wisdom of group settlement. However, I have no desire to speak on that subject at length. I can only hope that as the days go by we shall hear less of the comparisons sometimes introduced not with the idea of providing assistance, but with that of advancing something of a destructive nature. No one should criticise the dairying qualities of our South-West unless he has visited those lands and has secured such knowledge of the subject as will enable him to speak with authority. I claim that the results being obtained to-day in the South-West are a complete answer. The position of farming else-

where, unhappily, is bad at present. Apart from the unfortunate farming position in some of the Eastern States of Australia, we know that in the United States farming has come to a point when retrogression has entered. The United States farmers are faced with a specially difficult position, and the problem of overcoming the difficulty is one that the country must face. It is justifiable to draw a comparison at this point and to say that farmers whose lot is cast in Western Australia have a far better outlook than the farmers of the United States. The fiscal policy of Australia, whereby secondary industries are being nursed at the expense of the primary producers, is entirely wrong. As regards wheat farming, experience is showing that the light lands of Western Australia possess qualities that were never thought of previously. Some few weeks ago I had an opportunity of visiting the Wongan light lands experimental farm, and I was greatly impressed by what I saw. The land immediately adjoining is of a nondescript and apparently useless character. Indeed, it might be said that the uncultivated land there seems not worth the cost of a title deed. Yet by intensified and energetic farming, the Wongan Hills experimental farm management has shown such wonderful results as are giving many of our farmers great hopes in respect of millions of acres hitherto regarded as being of comparatively little use. I understand that expert farmers have recommended caution in respect of the light lands, but the results obtained at the Wongan Hills experimental farm are convincing as to the practicability of using land of that description for farming purposes. Many members of this House had an opportunity a few weeks ago of visiting some of the Midland districts, particularly Carnamah, Three Springs, Arrino, and out towards Morawa. At each centre opportunities were availed of to inspect land, the superiority of which, it was confidently stated, could not be challenged in any other part of the Commonwealth. Even at Gingin, a district that to an extent has been regarded with comparative doubt, the visitors had an opportunity of inspecting the wonderful growth of lupin. That spectacle provided proof that the light lands possess qualities that were undreamt of a few years ago. The lupins were seen growing as high as the fences and demonstrated how wonderfully fertile the land is with the appli-

education of proper treatment. I would like to conclude by reminding members of the splendid advice that was telegraphed by the member for Wagin (Mr. Stubbs), to the "Sunday Times" recently. He recommended the farmers of Western Australia to exercise care to see that they did not sacrifice their farms. He advised them to think very hard before deciding to sell out. There is always a temptation to dispose of property in the belief that having done so the former occupants will achieve the millenium, and enjoy a full degree of happiness by living in the city. A man adopting that attitude behaves most unwisely. His interests are centred in the land; he has developed a knowledge in respect of farming that has brought him success. For such a man to sell out and remove to the city is in many instances a grave mistake. True happiness is found where one's interests lie, and I think the advice tendered by Mr. Stubbs was indeed wise. I hope that farmers having noted it, will act accordingly. We envy the Minister his task in the administration of a department that deals with so many phases of production that are developing so rapidly.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. M. F. Troy—Mount Magnet—in reply) [9.49]: I desire to thank hon. members for the manner in which they have discussed the Estimates. I would be hard to please if I were to complain about any of the criticism directed against the administration of the Department, because that criticism was helpful and to some extent generous. I am glad to say that the Leader of the Opposition did not enter into controversial matters regarding group settlement and I do not desire to do so either. We should make up our minds to make the best of things and realise that the position has not been satisfactory. The Committee will agree with me when I say I would be glad indeed if I were released from my responsibility regarding the removal of some of the group settlers. It is really a nightmare to me because we have to make provision for so many people. It has to be done on behalf of the settlers themselves. The fact remains, that every responsible officer concerned with group settlement matters is satisfied that the work must be undertaken. In the interests of the State and of the South-West we ought to do it, because I believe that if we reconstruct the group areas on sound lines and are able to establish the settlers in a few

years time, we shall give to the South-West a splendid advertisement and improve the production of that part of the State to an extent that is not possible at present. There has been some discussion regarding the limitation by the Agricultural Bank trustees of advances up to 50 per cent. on light land. No hon. member, I am sure, if he were in my position, could cavil much at the action of the trustees. With the glorious irresponsibility that members possess when in Opposition, they may say that the Agricultural Bank trustees should do this or should do that.

Mr. Sampson: We would like you to regard the comment as indicating co-operation.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: The trustees of the Agricultural Bank carry grave responsibilities. They have given splendid service to the State and their views should not be set aside lightly. While I have never felt disposed to interfere with the discretionary powers of the trustees, I have always discussed with them their particular viewpoint and if I have had a point of view that I considered was right, I have not hesitated to discuss it with the trustees.

Mr. Davy: That is all you can do—discuss it.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so.

Mr. Davy: You have no right to issue orders to them.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not issue orders to them.

Mr. Davy: I know that, but have you any legal right to do so?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: It would be an unwise interference with the functions of the trustees. On questions of policy I would be bound to intervene. It is my duty to discuss matters of policy with the trustees. I shall continue to do so while I am Minister for Lands. Regarding the light lands proposition, it has to be remembered that there are different types of light lands. Along the Wongan Hills railway line are to be seen various types of light land. Between Mullewa and Gutha there is country that I do not regard as sandplain country at all. It is more than second-class land, but I would not call it first-class land. I will be surprised, however, if in eight out of every ten years that type of country will not produce equally as good crops as will be secured from first class land. It is country that re-

ceives all the rainfall that is available, and that rainfall does not alter appreciably. It is open country and though light, the soil is good and sound. We have heard much about what has been done on light land. Years ago I persistently preached to the Murchison squatters the advisability of coming south and taking up that particular land. I told them that they suffered from droughts and that if they acquired 5,000 acres of the land I refer to, they could grow oats to feed their stock. All that country has been alienated. There is other light land that is not in the same category at all. While the trustees and the officials associated with the Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board have in the past occasionally misjudged areas, and will do so in the future, it has to be admitted that if those officers are of any value at all, they must, because of the experience they have gained, be relied upon to advise the trustees. So it is that the trustees depend to some extent upon their field officers. I admit all that the member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) said regarding the want of wisdom in some of their decisions, particularly regarding the recommendation for the use of a small quantity of fertiliser on the light land and the mistake that was made when farmers were encouraged to put larger areas under wheat, instead of concentrating on smaller areas from which better results could have been obtained. However, the officials have a fairly extensive knowledge of the land now and the trustees must benefit accordingly. I endorse the attitude of the trustees in so far as they have refused at this stage—I do not say they will do so when we have more experience—to advance more than 50 per cent. on light land, and to insist upon a man desirous of receiving assistance having a minimum of 2,000 acres of light land. I would not be prepared to send my worst enemy on to a farm in the sandplain country if the holding were of less than 2,000 acres.

Hon. G. Taylor: He would have no chance whatever of success.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Of course not, because there is not the substance in the land that will enable it to produce crops year after year. In the very nature of things the necessary elements are not in the soil and thus the country becomes exhausted rapidly. I believe that such country can best be developed by the growing of wheat, varied with oat crops and sheep. That will

help to build the soil up and make decent country of it. I hope that sheep will be associated with the farming of the wheat country as far as possible. The member for Avon (Mr. Griffiths) and the member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) referred to the payments of 6s. 8d. to returned soldiers. That has been done in a few instances, but unfortunately the fault has been largely with the settlers themselves. The Agricultural Bank trustees must do something to compel the settlers to act up to their obligations. Hon. members know, as I do, after long experience with the Agricultural Bank and its operations, that in 90 per cent. of the cases that have been investigated, the bank has been more than generous to the settlers concerned. I receive numerous letters appealing to me to rectify matters. Although I have given careful consideration to them, and have gone through the files to ascertain the real position, in not one instance have I taken exception to the bank's point of view. I had to arrive at that decision because in most instances the settlers had not tried to live up to their obligations. Naturally, pressure must be brought to bear on men who will not attempt to help themselves, and we cannot carry such men indefinitely. It would be a policy of indifference to continue to assist such men if they refused to honour their obligations. The member for York made reference to the appearance of Southern Europeans in the agricultural districts, and the instructions that have been issued that preference was to be given to British clearers in the expenditure of Agricultural Bank advances. I admit the hon. member was decent in his references and I do not take exception to what he said. The policy he indicated, however, was instituted by my predecessor, the former Minister for Lands. If we intend to maintain our own obligations to the Imperial Government, we must find work for the migrants who are sent out here. If hon. members are to be content to give mere lip service to the Imperial migration scheme, well and good; but if they desire to do more than that, they must see that the migrants we bring out from Great Britain are given a chance of employment. They should see that their positions are not taken by Italians and Czecho-Slovaks who are forcing the Britishers out of employment. I can quite see the hon. member's point of view. I am prepared to admit that some of our own people will not take on clearing. I am not blind to these facts. I agree that

when they take a contract they must complete it. In some instances they have induced the farmer to give them a contract, and before its completion they have left the job. Frequently when a clearing contract is thrown up, the last state of the land is worse than the first. Still a great many people will not give the Britisher a chance, and so I am insisting that they shall do so. When our own kith and kin come to this country we must give them an opportunity to make good. I have letters informing me that farmers come down in motor trucks and take gangs of these southern Europeans to work on their farms, but will not give the Britisher a chance. I have tried to impress upon those employers that they must employ their own people. On the other hand, when any farmer can bring a bona fide case showing that he has had a bad deal from Britishers or Australians, I am prepared to consider it. I know that in some cases the farmers do get a bad deal, but I do not think it happens frequently. One man with a big tract of country complained to me that he could not get clearers. I advised him to write to Mr. Johnson, the secretary of the A.W.U. at Geraldton. He admitted that Mr. Johnson sent him up two clearers, but when those men arrived the farmer had no work to give them, and he put them off with £1. That is not the way to treat honest men who have been sent to a job. I am going to insist that men like that give a fair opportunity to Britishers, failing which I will advise the Bank not to make any advances. I have had a lot of protests from farmers on this question of labour. I wrote to one man, telling him of our obligations to the British Government. Then I forwarded his letter to the New Settlers' League, and they wrote me as follows:—

I have to acknowledge receipt of your communication of the 29th ultimo enclosing correspondence with Mr.——— and in reply wish to advise that I have experienced Australian clearers available for this work and have wired Mr.——— that the league can supply his requirements.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: The probabilities are they sent up a lot of new chums.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Well, even the new chums have to be provided for. Another man wrote to me stating that he could not get clearers. I sent across to the State Labour Bureau, and Mr. Hitchens replied as follows:—

In reply to yours of the 11th instant with reference to the application of Mr.——— that

he be allowed to employ Italians, I have to inform you there is no difficulty in obtaining Britishers at this office for all clearing contract work available.

Mr. Lindsay: Our trouble is to get them to take clearing contracts and complete them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Of course they must complete contracts. Mr. Hitchens says he has plenty of men who will take clearing contracts, and the New Settlers' League say the same. Also I have had men sent from Geraldton to take contracts. In view of this experience I believe that quite a number of people prefer to employ southern Europeans.

Mr. Latham: Will there not be a tendency to bring down the price of clearing to men not on the bank when there is a big supply of southern Europeans?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am not prepared to say that they will take the work cheaply.

Mr. Latham: Some of them are pretty hard up just now.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have not the slightest prejudice against Italians and Czechoslovakians. They are good workers and they will make good citizens. But we have to introduce a British migrant for every £75 of British money spent on public works. So we have to consider our obligations to the British Government. It is not right that, without trial, farmers should turn down their own people to the extent they seem to be doing. We must be careful to employ Britishers whenever we can get them. Of course, if a man does not give the farmer a fair deal, he is not deserving of any consideration.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The trouble is that a lot of these contracts were let several months ago.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When a contract is let, it must be completed. In the old days of land settlement the Agricultural Bank advances were given primarily to enable the settler to do the work himself, until he was able to produce. Nowadays, the majority of the settlers employ somebody else.

Hon. G. Taylor: And they make a bit out of it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, I will not admit that: indeed, there is not much to be made out of it. But these days they want to get a big move on and require a large advance with which to do it. They want other men to do the heavy work. That

is all right within reason, but if we utilise other people's services, we must employ our own people.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: In many instances the farmer pays half a crown a day more than the bank pays him.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: And so he ought to. The Agricultural Bank advance is only a portion. It is never the full amount. It is an intimation to the settler that he must be as frugal as he can, and keep down his costs. One newspaper, the "Sunday Times" attacked me about this policy and said it was the dictum of the Trades Hall. I was surprised to see such a strong Imperial paper as the "Sunday Times" taking up that attitude, and demanding that I should give consideration to foreigners as against Britishers. I hope members understand my attitude. People must realise that our own citizens must receive first consideration. I have heard a lot about the necessity for co-ordination between the Lands Department and the Agricultural Bank. When members speak of co-ordination they have in mind that the Lands Department should not sell a block of land unless the Agricultural Bank is prepared to advance money on it. That kind of co-ordination is impossible. The Lands Department is a seller of land. It does not guarantee the land to be productive or non-productive. There is the land, and people can apply for it. Anyone who takes up land does so without compulsion. He applies for a block, but immediately he does so we are told by members that no matter how poor it may be the bank must fall in behind him and advance him money. Some people say, "I am prepared to put my time and labour into the block, and the Government ought to be ready to put their money into it." I remember a settler who in the early days of my district wanted an advance on his holding. The bank inspector was Mr. Josiah Mills, who recommended that no advance should be made. This settler made a terrible outcry. At the opening of the Ajana railway he said, "I am prepared to put my money and labour into this block. If I am prepared to do that, why are not the Government prepared to put money into it?" In the natural course of events he went bankrupt and during the proceedings he informed the Master of the Bankrupt Court that all his losses were due to the Government. I would not ask the Government to finance me on the best of

country that I had taken up as a speculation. People who take up land for that reason do so on their own responsibility. If the bank were prepared to follow any man who wished to settle on any kind of land, the situation would become impossible.

Mr. Davy: They would want a gold mine behind them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Members who have spoken on that question have not been over critical. I am sure they would not adopt any other policy than is being followed at present. I know nothing about the action of the Tender Board in recommending that Government Departments should purchase dates instead of dried fruits. The matter has never come under my notice. I suppose the hon. member got the information from the institution. We have given to the dried fruit growers legislation that we would be very cautious about giving to any other body of people. We have put the industry and the marketing of the products into their own hands. Viticulturists here are no worse off than they are in the Eastern States. The chief difficulty is that of over production. The commodity is sold abroad at a loss, and that loss has to be made up by local consumption. No doubt, in due course, the industry will flourish again as it did some time ago. Improved marketing facilities will put the industry on its feet.

Mr. Sampson: Western Australian wine does not receive fair consideration.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Government cannot bring in legislation to compel people to drink Western Australian wines as against those of some other country.

Mr. Latham: The only thing is to educate the people.

Mr. Mann: That would be opposed to the Constitution.

Mr. Ferguson: Could you not issue a Western Australian wine license so that the vignerons may sell their wines?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not know about that. The member for Moore spoke about sandplain country along the Midland Railway. I have seen it, also similar patches of country in other places. It may yet have its uses. The Government would not be justified in entering upon a great scheme of sandplain development. Our first duty is to develop the productive lands, and the poorer lands can be brought into

use at a later stage. That is the soundest policy. No doubt a lot of land near the coast, where there are good patches, would yield well. It will no doubt be brought under cultivation by people who require grazing facilities. The dairying country near Wanneroo consists largely of swamps where the drainage difficulty is considerable. The cost of drainage is a great handicap to its development. In connection with the Peel Estate, the first estimate of the cost of drainage by Mr. Arney was £24,000. The next estimate in 1921 by Mr. Hutchinson was £50,990. Then Mr. Arney brought in a later estimate of £75,000, and in 1922 Mr. Anketell estimated the cost at £180,000. So far the drainage has cost £521,000. We have not yet completed the drainage, and the Engineer-in-Chief has indicated that an expenditure of another £100,000 is required. The important thing is drainage. We ought not to attempt to settle this kind of country without it. I shall bear in mind the remarks of the member for Moore about the country at Moore River. If it can be procured at a reasonable price we shall probably consider the matter. The price must be reasonable and the country must be good. It must not be expected that because the Government may buy this land it is to be exploited. Everything depends on whether the land can be utilised, whether there is sufficient quantity to form a settlement and maintain a factory, and whether the land can be procured at a reasonable price. My last reference is to the surveying of the country out east. The number of surveyors employed is 52, the greatest number since 1910. The surveying staff has been increased since last year. I have informed Mr. Camm that no obstacle will be placed in the way of this country being surveyed, and that the money will be provided for the work. I have so far met every request made by Mr. Camm with regard to surveying this country and opening it up for settlement.

Hon. G. Taylor: Are you surveying in 1,000-acre or 2,000-acre blocks?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It will be classified first and surveyed according to the quality of the land. Everything depends on the quality. The number of surveyors working is 46. Sixteen are engaged in subdivisional surveys and seven are employed in classification surveys. Subdivisions are proceeding in the following

localities: south of Southern Cross and west of Marvel Loch, Lake King, Newdegate, east of Grass Patch, east of Ballidu, Lake Carmody and Lake Hurlestone. Classification surveys are in progress in the following districts: south of Southern Cross and east of the rabbit-proof fence, east of Dalwallinu, Ravensthorpe, Forrestania. Mr. Camm has assured me that he hopes to get 1,500 blocks in that locality. If we get 1,300 we shall do very well. Mr. Camm said that he will have that country available for selection before the end of the financial year.

Mr. Lindsay: You have 350 blocks already at Mollerin East. I hope you have not forgotten them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I hope to get the country settled as speedily as possible. Money is available and many eyes are turned to Western Australia. I do not lose sight of the fact that some of these days there will be a check to development on account of our getting a bad season or two. It is well to bear that in mind. A bad season or two would not deter me from putting my money into wheat growing because it is only the natural condition of things. No country escapes handicaps in the way of drought or wet seasons, and we are bound to get an occasional bad season, but that after all is merely a phase of agriculture. In the Eastern States farmers get a number of bad seasons but they carry on. Similarly we would carry on here. I am endeavouring to impress upon settlers in all the new areas that they must get down to fallow conditions. I think the Department of Agriculture could do more in this matter. The officials would do well to preach to the new settlers day after day that unless they fallow the land properly, they will not be farming on safe lines. We are getting out east into country where the rainfall is less than it is in the settled wheat belt, but I am satisfied that if settlers will farm on safe lines they will be able to establish themselves prosperously. I thank members for their references to the department and I agree with them that we must congratulate ourselves on the good season being experienced.

Item, Clearing, Motor running expenses, rebates to settlers supplying butter, milling, etc., £2,000.

Mr. LATHAM: What is the meaning of motor expenses in this item?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In the beginning of group settlement it was the custom to run a motor for the use of settlers.

but that has been discontinued. We do not propose to carry on that system.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Agricultural Bank, Industries Assistance Board, Soldiers' Land Settlement, £5:

Item—Assistant General Manager, Deputy Managing Trustee, Agricultural Bank, £852.

Mr. MANN: The salary of this officer shows an advance of £48 on last year. I am glad he has received an increase, but it is not in keeping with the increases granted in other departments. I would have liked to see him get £100. I doubt whether there is an officer in the many Government departments who has the responsibilities that Mr. Grogan has. The general manager, Mr. McLarty, is away from the bank a good deal of the time dealing with group settlement and other matters, and the general management of the bank for a long time has been practically in the hands of Mr. Grogan.

Hon. G. Taylor: And it has been in good hands, too.

Mr. MANN: It has been in excellent hands. The Under Secretary for Mines, the Under Secretary for Works and the Under Secretary for Law receive £960, the Commissioner of Taxation £900, and the Government Printer £960. Those officers are doubtless entitled to every penny they get, but I think Mr. Grogan should have been put on the same footing. Anyone who has had business with Mr. Grogan can testify to his knowledge, tact and capabilities.

Hon. G. Taylor: He is as fine a man as you could wish to do business with.

Mr. MANN: The Minister will be able to speak of Mr. Grogan's fine qualities. Although it is too late this year to do anything, I should like the Minister to give an assurance that Mr. Grogan next year will be put on the same mark as the other officers I have mentioned.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The matter is entirely out of my hands. It depends upon the Public Service Commissioner and the Appeal Board.

Mr. Mann: You could make a recommendation.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No.

Mr. Mann: Who made all the other recommendations?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There was a reclassification and then the Appeal Board granted the increase.

Mr. Davy: The increase to the General Manager was an administrative act.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes; I think his increase was granted by an amendment of the Act. I admit all that has been said about Mr. Grogan's qualifications. I regard him as a very valuable officer.

Mr. Mann: We shall not be able to retain such capable officers if we do not pay them well.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The matter is in the hands of the Public Service Commissioner and no recommendation of mine would be of value.

Hon. G. Taylor: You could not interfere. If you did you would get into a hopeless muddle.

Mr. Mann: I think the Minister might use his influence in the matter.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If my sympathy with or my belief in Mr. Grogan's capacity is of any use, he has it. The reclassification has been completed and the Appeal Board have determined the matter, and there is an end to it.

Mr. Mann: This is my only opportunity to mention it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I should say Mr. Grogan's responsibilities are equal to those of any Under Secretary. Mr. McLarty has been engaged in duties other than those pertaining to the general manager. However, he has been relieved of quite a number of them. The aggregate was utterly beyond the capacity of any one man.

Vote put and passed.

Votes—Group Settlement, £12,119; Immigration, £5,655; Council of Industrial Development, £1,176—agreed to.

Progress reported.

BILL—BROOMEHILL LOT 602.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

House adjourned at 10.35 p.m.