

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Over a period of 25 years.

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: Yes. If the opinion of my friend is right, we have lost £7,500,000. Suppose we could have obtained 5s. a ton, we would have lost in royalties £3,750,000 instead of a paltry £250,000.

Hon. J. Nicholson: May I suggest that that has been saved as a result of the embargo?

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: Exactly. The point I wish to make is that if the Government enters into any other negotiations, it should not be satisfied with 9d. a ton, but should obtain a much more substantial royalty. If my friend's contention is right and we should have had 10s., then during the next few years Western Australia would have received £7,500,000 royalty. This would have shown that the North has great possibilities.

On motion by the Honorary Minister, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.33 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 27th September, 1938.

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

QUESTION—STATE SHIPPING SERVICE.

Retirement of Manager.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM asked the Minister representing the Chief Secretary: 1, On

what date was Mr. S. S. Glyde notified of the termination of his appointment as manager of the State Shipping Service on account of his reaching the retiring age? 2, On what date did he commence leave previous to retirement?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, Mr. Glyde was sent to England on 22nd June, 1936, in connection with the building of the m.v. "Koolama." After his return, on the 17th November, 1936, he was advised that his services would be retained until the m.v. "Koolama" entered the State Shipping Service. Following such advice, he was notified of the termination of his service on the 30th May, 1938. 2, 1st June, 1938.

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

1, Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act Continuance.

Introduced by the Minister for Lands.

2, Fremantle Gas and Coke Company's Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Works.

3, Auctioneers Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Justice.

BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1938-39.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 22nd September; Mr. Sleeman in the Chair.

Vote—Lands and Surveys, £57,850:

HON. C. G. LATHAM (York) [4.33]: I had not intended to discuss the Lands Estimates and was prepared to leave it to other members on the Country Party benches to advance what views they deemed necessary. But the Minister, as usual, indicated that he intended to draw some statement from the Leader of the Opposition. We endeavoured to interrupt as little as possible during the Minister's speech, but a small, innocent interjection of mine resulted in his getting very cross. I regret that the Minister becomes offensive when he is cross. I commend the Government for its actions in writing down the value of properties, and I certainly have no complaint to voice in that

respect. Nor am I jealous because of what the Government has done. In fact, there was no alternative to adopting other than the action it took. Naturally the Government cannot continue to load farmers with indebtedness to an extent that makes it impossible for them to carry on and pay interest on the financial burden. What alternative could there be? It could only be to replace the present settlers with less qualified farmers. In the circumstance, I am not the slightest bit annoyed, more particularly as the Government did whatever any other Government would have done in the circumstances. The Minister presented a very comprehensive review of the activities with which his department is concerned, but nevertheless indicated that he was a little out of step with the Premier, who displayed some optimism regarding the future. There was an undercurrent of pessimism throughout the remarks of the Minister for Lands. Of a truth he was entitled to be somewhat pessimistic, when making a comparison between last year's results and the present prospects of the agricultural industry. What the Minister for Lands is concerned about more than anything else is the value of the production from the lands of the State, and in this respect the outlook for wool and wheat is anything but bright. It is true that during the last few days the price of wheat has improved somewhat. The most remarkable thing is that the price for Australian wheat on the London market today is higher than that of any other wheat offering for sale in London. For the first time over a long period Australian wheat has obtained a higher price than Canadian No. 3. Even now, however, it is very much below a payable price. Wool being down to 9d. a lb., members will realise that it is impossible to expect that industry to be able to pay its way in view of the fact that it has been estimated by authorities that the cost of producing wool in Australia is 1s. a lb. With wool at 9d. a lb. and the cost of production 1s. a lb., and with wheat at 2s. 5½d. a bushel, and the cost of production at 3s. to 3s. 4d. at siding, the outlook for both industries is impossible. In addition, those industries are being loaded with increased taxation, not only by the State but by the Federal Government as well. While the Federal imposition may not be a direct tax on the wheat industry, that industry is indirectly greatly affected, because the cost of production is increased. While prices

are low there is a tendency to restrict the areas under production. If prices are high, there is an impetus to production. Large areas of fallowed land on which a considerable amount of money has been spent, cannot be thrown out of production simply because the price of wheat happens to be low. The farmer has always been a real optimist from the day he took up his farm, otherwise he would not have been able to continue operations against the adverse conditions that have prevailed. We cannot help but agree with the Minister for Lands that the prospects are not very bright for those two industries.

The dairying industry has considerably improved and that improvement has been effected by the establishment of a home price for butter fat. This side of the House advocated some time ago that there should be a fixed price within the State. We said that the price of butter fat should be guaranteed at 1s. and if that were done the producer would be in a happy position. The price is now considerably higher than that, and it enables the producer to pay his way and make much more than when butter fat was 9d. a lb. As we have assisted the butter producer, the whole-milk producer and the dried-fruits grower by legislative enactment, we can surely do something to assist the wheatgrower in this State and throughout Australia. To ask the farmers continually to contribute, as they have done, to the food supply of the people at prices below the cost of production is unfair. We can assist them by a home consumption price and I can assure the Minister that when he introduces legislation to fix a home consumption price he will have all possible support from this side of the House.

The Minister says that during the three years in which the National Party Government was in office that Government did nothing. I point out to the Minister—though I do not want to make him cross about it—that it was impossible for us to do anything at that stage. If we had written down the estates to the value that we might have considered reasonable, it would have still been necessary for them to be written down again. While the Minister claims he has done a good job—and I have no quarrel in respect of that—if prices remain as they are I am not at all sure that further writing down will not be necessary. Western Australia is not the only State that has had to

write down. I pointed out by interjection that Victoria has written off £15,000,000 in its irrigation areas. That is a very large sum. I do not know what New South Wales has written off the soldier settlements in its irrigation area. New South Wales is in an even worse condition than this State while South Australia is also in a very bad way. Wherever there has been forced settlement—or what I might call hot-house settlement—large sums of money have had to be written off. This State is not particularly to blame for having had to write off heavy indebtedness. That writing off was made necessary by a certain set of circumstances over which no Minister had any control. We could have made ourselves popular while we were in office by writing down the debts of the farmer, but to have attempted such a thing at that time would have been foolish in view of what was ahead of us. The writing down was left to the present Government and I have no quarrel about what it has done. This year prices are low, but last year they were what might be called fairly average prices. Had the prices remained so, that would have seemed to be the psychological time to have written down the debts and placed the farmer in a position to wipe off his indebtedness. Wheat was formerly somewhere about 5s. a bushel. For the last year it will probably have averaged 3s. 6d. Without knowing what is ahead of us, we may estimate that this year it will be somewhere about 2s. or 2s. 6d. One feels that if conditions had improved sufficiently to enable the good prices to be maintained, that would have been the right time to place the farmer in a position to meet his indebtedness and give him a ray of hope for the future.

Every time we say that a good deal of that indebtedness was created during the period in which the Minister was in control, he becomes very cross. I intend to show the House that there is no doubt about it. The expenditure on the South-West and some agricultural areas was incurred during his term. He referred to the migration and land settlement agreement that was made by the National Government and said that that agreement had to be carried out by his Government. I have before me the papers dealing with that agreement. It is true that an agreement was entered into in 1922 and signed in February, 1923, between the Premier of the day and the Imperial authorities for the expenditure of a sum not exceeding six million pounds for the purpose

of land settlement in the South-West portion of the State. The agreement set out very clearly what the responsibilities of the Imperial authorities would be, and also required that the Federal Government should be brought into the matter with a view to reducing the interest rate the State would have to carry for a period of ten years. The Labour Government took office in 1924. It was not altogether satisfied with the agreement, and the Premier of the day, now the member for Boulder, during a visit to England in 1925, entered into a fresh agreement. In that agreement, which was signed in December, 1925, it was provided that the first agreement should be cancelled. The first agreement was, accordingly, cancelled in December, 1925, in accordance with paragraph 1 of the agreement, after the Preamble, which sets out, "The Secretary of State and the Commonwealth Government and the State Government hereby cancel the first agreement." If we refer to the Preamble, we find that the first agreement is that of 1922. Thus the agreement entered into by the National Party Government and the United Kingdom and Commonwealth Governments was cancelled. The agreement made by the then Premier provided for an increase of the amount of money from £6,000,000 to £7,083,000. Provision for that was made in an agreement signed on the 8th April, 1925. That was done under an Act passed by the Imperial Parliament and known as the Empire Settlement Act. So, while an agreement was entered into in 1922 by the then Government, it was subsequently cancelled and a new agreement was made in 1925. I propose to show the Committee by returns submitted from time to time how that money was spent, and who was responsible for the spending of it. The agreement signed in 1922 was made by the National-Country Party Government, which went out of power in 1924. In our "Hansard" for 1930, on page 662, a return sets out the amounts of money advanced from loan funds for the purposes of group settlement. For 1922-23 the amount was £506,803, and for 1923-24 it was £822,910. So that the total of advances for those two years was £1,329,713. That money was expended by the National-Country Party Government. The Labour Government took office in 1924, and for its first year, 1924-25, the amount was £1,124,252. For 1925-26 it was £1,335,009. Taking return No. 10 supplied by the

Treasurer in introducing his Budget for this year, we find that for 1926-27 the amount advanced was £1,428,486. That was the time when a change of Ministers took place, and in 1927-28, the year in which the present Minister for Lands took over, the expenditure was £1,122,829. For the next year, 1928-29, the amount was £766,893. Money was then becoming more difficult to obtain. In 1929-30, the last year of the Labour Government, the expenditure was £639,611. That made a total expenditure during the six years of the Labour Government, from 1924 to 1930, of £6,417,080. So during the Labour Government's term of office very large sums of money indeed were expended, for which the Labour Government is responsible.

Ministers can hardly blame the agreements that were entered into between the National-Country Party Government and the Imperial Government prior to the agreement made by the Labour Government, in respect of that huge expenditure. If the policy of the National-Country Party Government was not a sound one, the Labour Government would not have continued it, any more than it continued in other respects the policies of Governments to which it was opposed and which were defeated at the polls. In 1933, when I was associated with the Government, the amount of money expended was £360,451. During the last year we were in office we spent in the group settlement areas £79,646. Then the present Minister came back into office, and in his first year, 1933-34, spent £115,904. Certainly there is a diminution after that. In 1934-35 the expenditure was £26,073, and for the last year of expenditure on group settlement from loan funds, 1935-36, the amount fell to £9,618. For the years 1933-36 £151,595 was expended. It is hardly fair to blame us for expenditure of money when we had nothing whatever to do with it. My personal opinion is that sufficient care was not exercised in the expenditure of that money. I am convinced that the men on the land reaped very little benefit from the huge expenditure. I contend, also, that it is not fair to say the previous Government was responsible for the selection of the land, because very little land indeed had been selected up to the end of 1924. I will admit a good many faults were made in selection of poor land.

The Minister for Lands: So far as I know, except as regards one estate the previous Government was responsible for the whole of the selection.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Minister always says that. He refuses to take any blame. But he was in office for three years prior to 1930, associated with the Government whose Minister for Lands had held that portfolio for three years previously. All that land around Greenbushes was selected afterwards, and a vast area of land was selected from 1924 onwards by the Labour Government or its officers.

The Minister for Lands: Not by me.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: For three years the present Minister was there.

The Minister for Lands: I abandoned a thousand holdings.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: There is no doubt about that. To abandon a thousand holdings is not difficult. I propose to state, of course, what area was abandoned, and how much of it during the various periods.

The Minister for Lands: Those holdings are still abandoned.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That goes on continually. We settle land, and it is abandoned, and then it goes back into settlement again. I do not know that always the same mistakes occur. Take the Esperance settlement. We have probably some lessons to learn from that. In the early days no part of the State was more difficult to understand from the agricultural aspect than was the Esperance district. When I went down there, as I have said previously, with the member for Irwin-Moore (Hon. P. D. Ferguson) in 1928 or 1929, my opinion was that I would not send my worst enemy into that district. However, the last time I visited the area I altered my opinion, because I found that the land was improving considerably. The land we despise to-day may be land that we are glad to utilise to-morrow. Therefore, while we abandon properties from time to time, that does not say we are justified in abandoning them permanently. Up to the present the farmers have had a most difficult time, and the Government a very bad one. Every Government that has attempted to do anything down there has lost money, and a considerable amount has had to be written off. At the moment the best that can be

done in the Esperance district is being done. The Minister did pay the previous Government a compliment because he pointed out that during the period that Government was in office prices were very low. During the three years of the previous Government's administration, the total production was worth £20,000,000, whilst during the first three years of the present Government's administration the value was only £16,000,000, although the price was considerably higher. The yield, however, was very much lower, but the price went up to 5s. During the last three years the value of the wheat was £18,429,000. The Minister pointed out that from 1930 to 1933, while the position was very difficult, the State did benefit by the production of wheat, and while the prices were much lower the yield was higher. The Minister pointed out that the reason why the south-west areas had entered upon increased prosperity was because butter fat had increased from 9.9d. per lb. in 1933 to 15.04d. in 1937. That statement is perfectly true. I had previously pointed out that the prosperity of the South-West was due to the increased price of butter fat, and the Minister had said that that was not correct. How, thus, are we going to reconcile the two statements? He stated that butter fat was 15d. per lb. when I was in charge of the Lands Department. Really, the average price was nothing like 15d. per lb. between the years 1930 and 1933. Looking at the returns, I find that the price of butter fat dropped 50 per cent. during that period, and so the statement made by the Minister falls to the ground. But I wonder which statement it is that the Minister really wants us to believe. In any case, I know which statement is the correct one, and that is the statement I made first.

The Minister for Lands: In one of those years butter fat was 17d. per lb.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: In 1930 butter fat was 114s. per cwt. on the London market and later it fell to 79s. To-day the position is totally different. We have a fixed price within the State for butter fat. So, when the Minister gets annoyed and he makes wild statements, one cannot be blamed for also becoming angered, especially when one tries to assist him. If anyone attempts to assist the Minister, he becomes very cross and makes inaccurate statements. I want

to show him the position the Lands Department was in when he took office. Of course, nothing any other Government has ever done has resulted in any good for the State. That is the Minister's view. But the Minister has himself shown that he is quite incapable of controlling his department because he has unloaded everything on to boards. He has had very little to do in the Lands Department in recent times, although just now, I suppose, he has additional duties to perform by reason of his occupying the post of Acting Premier and Treasurer. The Minister has transferred the control of the Agricultural Bank to Commissioners, who are responsible to no one, so far as I can see, while the Lands Department itself has very little business to do.

The Minister for Lands: It has more now than it has ever had.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I say it has not. There is no activity in that department now compared with a few years ago, and what I gauge the position by is the present position of land settlement. Let us take the reports of the Agricultural Bank Commissioners from 1930 onwards. Between 1930 and 1933 the number of securities in the hands of the Bank increased by only 722. Those were the three years in which we were in office. The net increase in the period 1933-1936, during which the present Ministry was in control, increased to 1,576, and during the same period no fewer than 3,065 properties were abandoned. These are the figures of the abandonments:—1933-34, 689; 1934-35, 1,041; 1935-36, 710, and 1936-37, 625; making the total 3,065. That is what happened after the Minister took charge. He must be out of step with the farmers, otherwise so many abandonments would not have taken place. A great number of the abandonments have taken place in the 3,500-farms area. The Minister and his Government were not satisfied to confine their activities under the agreement to which I have referred; they desired to extend operations in the direction of Esperance and had there not been a check there might also have been a settlement established between Salmon Gums and Esperance. The Minister was quite cross when one Government official wired him and said that there was a doubt as to whether the country was free from kopi.

The Minister for Lands: Who was the official?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Minister accused me of dangling this before the public. I never made any statement of the kind.

The Minister for Lands: Who made it?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am not responsible for statements made by other members in this House. The Minister is never fair when he is trying to get his own way. Where experience is concerned, I assure the Minister I have had more than he has, and that is in respect of the initial development of a farm. I know what it means to be placed 50 or 60 miles from a railway. Thus, I would probably act with caution.

Mr. Cross: Tell us what you did at the Peel estate.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I know what I would like to do with the hon. member.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: As I do not intend to carry out my threat, there is no need to call me to order. I know that a lot of money was spent at the Peel estate, but the whole affair was badly managed. The matter that raised bitter feeling in the House the other night was the statement by the Minister that when the Country Party organisation raised the question of group settlements a rift occurred, and that I then left the Country Party and joined Sir James Mitchell.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister for Lands withdrew that statement.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Then I, too, will withdraw what I said. But I do object to the Minister referring to me personally as being jaundiced and full of rancour, simply because I differ from him. I do not speak in that way about Ministers. Of course I am aware that it is very difficult to get on with the Minister for Lands. He may say something with which I do not agree, or he may not agree with some proposal I may be advocating. But I do not become offensive, nor do I consider that he is jaundiced merely because I consider he is not right. He is always offensive.

The Minister for Employment: You should carefully read your speech on the Bureau of Industry Bill.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I admit that I may impute motives, but I am entitled to do that, but I do not say that the Minister has got a job at £1,750 a year—

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member would be out of order.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Minister was out of order in referring to it. The Minister told us that he had satisfied everyone with whom he had spoken regarding the administration of the Lands Department, and he also accused us of going around the country preaching the gospel against the Government in the hope of the people opposing the Government. I have never attempted to do anything like that. The Minister attended the Returned Soldiers' Conference yesterday and I notice that he was greeted with applause. A resolution was carried immediately after he left, and it may be worth while having a glance at it. This is how the newspaper report reads—

Living Allowances.

Mr. Newton (Manjimup) moved:—

Congress considers the time now opportune for a general investigation into conditions and standards of living of clients with a view to an adjustment of statutory demands by the Agricultural Bank, if it is proved that the living allowance be inadequate.

The tone of the remarks of Mr. Troy and the chairman, Mr. Newton said, would lead to the belief that settlers in the South-West were living in a Utopia or a millionaire's paradise. Undoubtedly there was a living in dairying, but at the same time many settlers were still carrying too big a load of capitalisation on their holdings.

Mr. Campbell (Pingrup) maintained that the present Government had always rejected the idea that a man should get a living before he met his obligations. "My branch considers that the settler should be enabled to provide for his family first," the speaker said. He added that the £150,000 received for drought relief in this State had merely been lent under the statutory demand for repayment—"this Shylock business of wanting everything back for anything given, and a little more." In many cases, he added, settlers were not obtaining a decent living; yet the statutory demands were being met.

The motion was carried unanimously.

All that followed a statement made by the Minister. I was not present at the conference, so he cannot blame me for having preached that gospel to the meeting. While the Minister gave us a rosy picture in the House the other evening, really everything in the garden is not as lovely or as brilliant as the colours in which he painted that picture.

The Minister for Lands: You said a little while ago that I was pessimistic.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Yes, in comparison with the Premier. I said that after all there was reason for a little pessimism, and I agree with the Minister that the difficulties are not yet overcome. He must not, however, blame this side of the House. The farmer is the best judge. I am prepared to accept the word of the farmer. He realises that if the position is hopeless considerably more money will have to be written off. The farmer has no wish that that should be done if he can get a fair price for his commodity. His desire is to be able to make ends meet. By the motion I have quoted it is shown that farmers have not a decent standard of living.

The Minister for Lands: That is an old tale.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Minister met them and talked to them. Farmers are decent individuals, and they permitted the Minister to leave the conference. Doubtless he was not able to stay as long as he desired.

The Minister for Lands: They can get no more.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: If prices remain as they are I am afraid these people will have to get more.

The Minister for Lands: Do you say that farmers on the group settlements must get more?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am afraid even they will have to get more. Probably 10 or 15 years will elapse before their land can produce to its fullest extent. It can be brought into production only very slowly. We may assist but cannot hurry nature. I have seen remarkable improvements in the South-West, but unfortunately that country cannot be compared with other estates where the production is much greater, and where the pastures develop in a much shorter time.

I wish now to refer to the position in the North-East, but will leave the member for the district to express the views of the settlers concerned. We know the conditions there are deplorable. It is idle for the Minister to say that nothing can be done. Either the settlers will have to be removed and put on to other farms—

The Minister for Lands: I was referring only to group settlements.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: We misunderstood each other. These settlers are in an unfortunate position. I am glad the Minister intends to do something for them. It might be better to take them away and put them else-

where, or allow them to take up larger holdings, as was done at Esperance.

The Minister for Lands: We are doing that already.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Minister spoke about what the Government had done to reduce the price of land. We cannot expect the same price to be paid for pastoral land as for agricultural land. He will agree that is only right. When these settlers originally took up the land it was considered to be fit for wheatgrowing. After years of trial the settlers find it cannot grow wheat properly year after year. Unfortunately, even in the wheatbelt, a good deal of country requires to be broken up for a number of years. It cannot be allowed to lie for four or five years in the expectation of pastures being developed, even with top-dressing. The cost of getting a fair quantity of pasture is greater in such instances than it is elsewhere. The Minister does not say that the last word has been spoken about the settlers on the wheatbelt, and I am prepared to accept that. With regard to the South-West, I point out that a lot of land is lying idle there. It is doing nothing but breeding rabbits. The Minister has refused to allow men to take up land alongside their existing holdings. A letter was sent to me by one man at Nannup, and I passed it on to the Lands Department.

The Minister for Lands: What is the man's name?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That is not a fair question. I will hand the name to the Minister privately. He is a personal friend of the Minister.

The Minister for Lands: That is why he will not get it.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Will the Minister discriminate because this man is a friend of his?

The Minister for Mines: It is dangerous to give a friend anything in this country.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: If a man does the right thing he need not be afraid of public opinion. He need not treat his friends differently from his enemies. I would not expect to be treated like that by the Minister for Mines because he happened to be a friend of mine. I think he would do a fair thing, and I also think that of the Minister for Lands. I have been informed that this land is nothing but a breeding ground for rabbits. If settlers can make use of it, why

not let them do so? Already we have given them their holdings free. I make a plea that the Minister will look into this matter. The settler in question has a grown-up family with a son to help him, but he cannot get additional land because it is said he owes money.

Mr. Withers: Perhaps I know the man you mean.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Probably. That is a wrong policy. It may be necessary for this man to receive additional assistance.

The Minister for Lands: There is more than that in it.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: He may require assistance so that he may make ends meet. The Minister himself has said it is necessary at times to increase the area of a holding. Had areas been restricted in the Esperance district the settlers there would have been in poverty to-day. With the wonderful season they have had this year there should be very little doubt that they will make ends meet.

Mr. Lambert: You did not speak too nicely of them recently.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: How difficult it is to make people read! I do not know that I could have said more than I did. It is no use saying that because a man owes money he must be kept on a small block on which he cannot pay his way.

The Minister for Lands: You say this man is a personal friend of mine, and that I am treating him unfairly.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Yes.

The Minister for Lands: There is something wrong about it. I do not treat my enemies unfairly.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: No? The Minister treats some of his friends very unfairly.

The Minister for Lands: Not through the Lands Department.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: In this House he does. I now wish to refer to the special settlements. The Minister said he was not going to pay out any more on these settlements, and that it cannot be done. I do not know about that. If he had thoroughly investigated the expenditure at Nannup and at Nornalup he would have found that a lot of it was unnecessary.

The Minister for Lands: Not at Nannup.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Yes, at both places, but not at Napier. I have not been down there to quiz around and make out a

case against those settlements, but I would like to have the dissected accounts relating to some of the farms, if the Minister will make the necessary arrangements.

The Minister for Lands: I have changed the administration.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Probably it is now too late, and the horse has been let out of the stable. A little while ago, in company with other members, I visited the Napier settlement, and am satisfied that it is a success. If some money is written off that settlement it will not cost the State a penny. The settlers were all unemployed when they were placed there, and were married men with families. The State would probably have had to find some money and work for the men, but now they have homes of their own.

I have always argued, ever since I was Minister for Lands, that it was unwise to capitalise repurchased estates as we did, adding the interest to the purchase price, making the land twice its original value to start off with. This meant 100 per cent. increase on the purchase price. Such estates should not be handed over to people without money. The Premier, when sitting on this side of the House, said that was a silly statement for me to make. I replied that I would not put a man without money on a repurchased estate, because it was impossible for him to make a living and pay his way. That has been proved. First there is the purchase price—that is plus 5 per cent.—and then there is the interest. On top of this burden the settler has to acquire money by loan to develop the area, and buy his equipment. He becomes so heavily saddled with debt that his position is impossible at the outset. I believe it is possible to have subdivided estates, but they must be sold to people with money. The settlers must not be loaded with heavy interest rates, and be obliged to appeal to the Government for additional advances so that they may make ends meet. This is my contribution to the discussion. I felt I had said all I need say on the general Estimates, and I would not have risen again but for the fact that the Minister was so unfair. It all arose from an interjection. The only way out of the difficulty is for one to be out of the Chamber when the Estimates are being discussed. I do not like to be rude; it is not my nature to be. If I am going to keep in with the Minister, at least for the next fortnight, he

will have to be a little more considerate than he is at times.

The Minister for Lands: You have been very unfair yourself.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: My remarks have been quite fair, and have been based on fact. I have certainly not been offensive. I have documents to support everything I have said. Members on this side are glad to have the information that the Minister proposes to do something for those who are again facing a period of hopelessness. Unless something is done for those people, I do not know what will happen to them.

The Minister for Lands: We have been doing it every day.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I understand they are of opinion that sustenance will cease at the end of the month.

The Minister for Lands: We are doing something every day.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am glad to hear that. These people are not to blame for the position in which they find themselves; they have done their level best. When the land was originally settled good seasons made the country look attractive. We did not know it was going to be subject to droughts, as events have proved. I hope the Government will treat liberally all the settlers who need assistance.

MR. WARNER (Mt. Marshall) [5.28]: These Estimates considerably affect my district. I listened with a great deal of attention to the speech of the Minister. Undoubtedly the Lands Department and the Agricultural Bank have shown great sympathy towards the farming community, especially those in the marginal areas. I trust this sympathetic attitude will be the means of keeping farmers on their holdings and that they will be enabled to retrieve their positions. Representatives of farming constituencies desire to give credit where credit is due. We admit that the Government has done a great deal to help the farmers. Sympathetic treatment meted out to the settlers will, I believe, save the situation for many of them, and will mean that they will stay on their holdings instead of abandoning them. Particularly does this apply to one or two districts in my electorate. The producers still find themselves in an unfortunate position, not only in this State but in other parts of Australia. For some years past producers have not been able to get a price for their commodities, and therefore

have not been able to work at a profit. A few months ago it seemed that the season in the North-Eastern portion of the wheat belt was going to prove good. But unfortunately the rains did not come as expected, and now there is no possible chance for those areas even if rain does come. The Premier's outlook must have been very bright when he predicted a 40,000,000 bushel harvest. So far as the eastern wheat belt is concerned, his estimate will be out: some very heavy crops must be expected elsewhere to bring the yield up to that figure. Personally, I believe the Premier's estimate will be 6,000,000 bushels out. If the yield is 34,000,000 bushels, that will be a shock to the Government, as it will then lose the amount of credit overseas that the 6,000,000 bushels would produce, as well as rail freights and other advantages that might be derived from that quantity. Some provision should be made on the Estimates to enable the farmers in that district to carry on operations during the coming year, and this will make a difference to the estimated amount of revenue for the present year.

I have made a very careful study of my district. I spent a fortnight or 16 days in travelling over practically the whole of it, nor was I alone in doing so. The Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank also toured the district about the same time as I did, and I am pleased to know that they understand the position as well as they do. A very hard time faces the settlers in the north-eastern district this year. I discussed the position with the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank, who received me very courteously and made no demur at all about giving me a hearing on my return. I am quite satisfied from the statements made by the Commissioners that the farmers in my district are doing the best they can without assistance. What the position is likely to be has been well known to them for months past and I think I am right in saying that the reports of the inspectors of the bank to the head office have been carefully scrutinised. As I say, two of the commissioners travelled through the district to secure first-hand information about it. I am convinced, from statements made by the Chairman of the Commissioners, that the bank will do its part during the coming year. The present position of the farmers in the north-eastern wheat belt is unenviable and precarious. For three years they have

received low prices for their produce; and for the past four years they have suffered drought conditions. They have carried on each year, fallowing and putting in crops, hoping to get another harvest, and this season they are let down again. Some of the farmers did hope to reap a little crop last year and the year before; but drought conditions bred diseases and plagues, and the grasshopper pest cleaned up the little they might otherwise have got. These farmers have had no income for the past seven years, and, unless assisted by the Government, cannot continue their operations. Their plant has deteriorated, and in many cases is becoming worn out. At present they have no hope of replacing it. There would appear to be no hope of replacing the plant, unless the Bill suggested by the member for Avon is passed and they can obtain money for the purpose.

The Minister for Lands: Are you proposing to introduce such a Bill?

Mr. WARNER: It would not be much use to do so now. The farmer himself has lost seven years of his working life. That means more than seven years of the ordinary working man's life, because the farmer has not only worked long hours, but has had the worry to carry. We all realise the farmer must be kept in production. Where should those who live in the metropolitan area be if it were not for the primary producer? We know the primary producer keeps the State going. The miners, by their sweat and work, produce gold and coal; they are slaves. The timber hewer contributes his meed to our export trade; he works under hard conditions. But the farmer works much longer hours and, I think, in many cases harder; while in addition, he has the worry from year to year of his harvest. Yet he is the man who gets the least reward for his labour. During the years I have been in Parliament, I have, in common with other members representing country districts, always pleaded for better treatment for the man on the land, for better education facilities, railway services, water supplies and better living conditions. Is it not but right that the farmer should be granted some of those ameliorations that he is seeking all the time? Who has more right to better treatment by the people than has the primary producer? Should he not participate in the fruits of his labour? He

grows the food that we eat, yet in many cases he has not sufficient food or clothing for himself and his family. The men and the women who toil throughout the year on farms, more particularly in the north-eastern wheat belt, are denied the comforts enjoyed by people living in the metropolitan area. Even if the latter are taxed to ameliorate the conditions of those living on the land, there should be no grumbling, because surely those who produce what the others eat should enjoy the same standard of living. They are not asking too much in demanding a reasonable standard of living. The Minister must know that we dare not let the farmer abandon his holding; the farmer must be kept producing so that the people in the city may live. I ask of the Minister that he demand from the Federal Government, or from the State Government, an amount that will enable the farmer to replace some of the worn-out plant that he has been unable to replace during the past six or seven years. Some people say the farmers should have had new plant, but it has been impossible for them to obtain it during the last four or five years, and the fact that plant starts to wear out almost immediately it is put into use must be borne in mind. In addition, the farmers have been spending what money they could get on fencing and general improvements. They are therefore now in the unenviable position of not having efficient plant to do their work. They cannot be expected to do good work if they have not efficient plant and implements with which to do it. I hope the Minister will use every endeavour to equip the farmers in the marginal areas with plant and tools necessary to carry out their work. The past four seasons, with the drought and insect pests, have reduced large numbers of the farming community to the lowest ebb of poverty and distress, yet they have stuck to their holdings to grow food for the nation and keep this State solvent. The farmer often does not get sufficient out of his produce to maintain himself and his family. These facts are not sufficiently known to the people of the metropolitan area. The farmer does not desire to be continually squealing about his poverty, but I think the people of the metropolitan area should know the conditions under which he is living.

The Minister stated that Section 51 of the Agricultural Bank Act has proved a success and that the outcry against it has ceased. I believe this to be true. I have just attended a conference of the Lands Committee of the R.S.L. and no item concerning Section 51 or Section 53 of the Agricultural Bank Act appeared on the agenda. The reason is the sympathetic administration of the Act by the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank. I could quote some cases, but shall not take up the time of the House in doing so. I sincerely hope that this sympathetic treatment will continue. With the Agricultural Bank and the farmers working so harmoniously, the better it is for the farmers and the Bank.

I was pleased to hear the Minister conclude his speech with good wishes for the farmer and the hope for a better wind-up of the season. As far as the northern part of my district is concerned, however, I do not think the hope will be realised, as additional rain is not likely to fall now. The farmers there will be fortunate if they have a patch or two sufficient to yield hay and seed wheat; they cannot now hope to reap good crops no matter what rain we may have.

I desire to pay a tribute to the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank for keeping in touch with the districts under their control. As I have previously stated, the Chairman visited the marginal areas of the district and has the position there at his finger-tips. I have every reason to believe the Commissioners are working on a plan that will enable them to meet those conditions should they occur again. I trust that money will be made available to enable the Commissioners to carry out proposals for the marginal areas which, I believe, will prove satisfactory as soon as we get through the present cycle of bad seasons. The fact that the Commissioners are aware of the position has given much satisfaction to the settlers. The General Manager of the Bank, Mr. Abey, should be congratulated upon and thanked for the courtesy and consideration he extends to members representing country districts whenever they present any problem to him. He can be depended upon to give a prompt reply. Speaking for myself, I have received all possible consideration from him. The desire of the Bank, I am sure, is not to harass settlers, but to secure smooth working for them and for the Bank. In general, I believe that the Commissioners

are making every effort possible to help the settlers. The Chairman has advised me—and I gather this also from the interjections of the Minister—that the Bank will carry on next season those farmers who obeyed the directions of the Bank last year, namely, to prepare their fallow for the coming season, although they have no crop this year. I do not think the leased holdings will be abandoned. I believe that the scheme of grouping holdings will prove a safe one, and that the farmers may now extend their operations and run sheep, so that when good seasons return they will be able to apply for a transfer of the leased property. We cannot afford to have those areas abandoned. I am quite convinced that at present we are merely passing through a cycle of bad years. True, it has lasted longer than any similar cycle in our experience, but when the good seasons return, our asset will be well worth all the monetary assistance that has been given. I hope that sympathetic treatment will be extended to the farmers, not only in the north-eastern areas, but in those other marginal areas where bad luck has dogged them this year. The Minister should endeavour to make money available to replace some of the worn-out machinery on the farms and ensure that the Agricultural Bank will not be starved for funds to continue its sympathetic treatment of farmers.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet—in reply) [5.47]: I thank members for their reception of the department's Estimates. All seem to be satisfied that the department has done a very good job during the last few years. The Leader of the Opposition said he would not have spoken on these Estimates but for something I said in the course of my remarks. Let me point out that the hon. member has not been entirely generous in his remarks. He spoke of the number of settlers who have gone off the land. I admit that is a fact, but during his administration a thousand settlers went off the land.

Mr. Cross: He was careful not to say anything about them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But it was a progressive stage. I believe that Esperance lost 400 people who had to leave their holdings, but now it is admitted that the Esperance settlements are being developed along sound lines, and that the prospects for reconstruction there are very

hopeful. Many of the settlers who left the Esperance district are now working in the mines at Kalgoorlie, and many of them have told me that they propose to return to Esperance. If they can save a few pounds in the mining industry, they intend to return to the land. Thousands of farmers and their sons went to the goldfields when the seasons and conditions on the land were not good. They went to the goldfields where wages were high and work was plentiful at the time. That is only a repetition of what happened in the Eastern States during the depression of the nineties. Thousands of people left the land in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia and came to the goldfields. The goldfields were practically populated by farmers from the Eastern States. Later, many of them returned to the land. That must happen from time to time, and it is a good thing that when conditions in one place are bad, people should get out and seek a livelihood elsewhere. A community that does that is possessed of some quality. Is not that better than living on doles, and getting into debt? Of course it is. When I visit the Murchison goldfields and meet men and their sons who were formerly farming in the Geraldton district, they express a desire to return to the land. When seasons are bad and prices fall, people will move from the agricultural areas to other districts where the conditions for the time being are better. I repeat, it is a good sign when people have the initiative to do that sort of thing.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to group settlement. I did not propose to say a word about his association with group settlement, but he has brought it on himself.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Go for your life. I was never in charge of group settlement.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member said there were two agreements. One agreement was made by Sir James Mitchell with the British Government, but it was cancelled, and the then Premier (Hon. P. Collier) secured a better agreement.

Hon. C. G. Latham: And more money.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Sir James Mitchell proposed to make farms for £1,000 each, to clear 20 acres of land and stock it. Having done that, lo, a farm was made! It was not. Such a holding could

not carry stock to any extent. When we took office, group settlement was only in its initial stages. During our administration we provided the houses, stock, equipment, fencing and pastures for the holdings. Year after year, we made available large sums of money to further that work. That, however, was a policy handed down to us by the Mitchell Government, and it could not be side-stepped. We could not break faith with the British Government after thousands of settlers had been brought here. We had to go on with group settlement. The figures quoted by the Leader of the Opposition show that during my period of administration expenditure was reduced. That is a fact; I did reduce expenditure. Without boasting, I can claim that I restricted the waste on group areas and wiped out hundreds of locations that were unsuitable. I believe that the only land selected when the Collier Government was in office was the Marybrook Estate. I asked one surveyor why inferior land was selected for the group settlements, and he replied, "The truth is that migrants were coming here so fast that I had to find a place for them, and was not given time to select the best land." The late Hon. W. J. George made a similar statement in this House. One of the oldest surveyors told me that he was practically forced to select the land.

When I was in the Denmark district during the time of the reconstruction, I was informed that a large area had been selected there for the purpose of group settlement in the future. I asked where the area was and was told it was at a place called William Bay. On investigation I found that it was purely coastal sandplain and I said, "It will never do for group settlement." The reply was, "Well, the surveyors were told to take it as a fact." Had that scheme been proceeded with, we would have had a very disastrous experience there. We did not select the Northcliffe plain. Consequently I say that we did not have much to do with the expenditure on group settlement apart from that which was forced upon us. We can admit that the major portion of the expenditure incurred during our time was entailed for the provision of stock, houses, fencing, equipment and pastures.

When the subject of group settlement was under discussion in this House in the earlier stages, I gave some progressive examples. I gave an instance of a holding that had cost

more than £1,200 long before the home had been provided and stock purchased. Under the agreement, the British Government arranged to pay portion of the interest on every £1,000 or part thereof, and Mr. Collier got the consideration increased to £1,500. In those early days I considered that had we initiated a group settlement scheme in a small way and tried out the system first, we could subsequently have enlarged it with great advantage. Notwithstanding the millions of pounds that have been written off group settlement, I am confident that the money will be recouped to this country some day. I am glad to say that the group settlers are making good and will continue to make satisfactory progress so long as prices remain at a reasonable level. I consider that we have now paid for our experience; we know what is required, and year by year I believe group settlement production will return more and more to the State and prove of inestimable advantage.

I can say the same of the special settlements. The Leader of the Opposition stated that at Napier no money had been lost. Some money was lost there, because the settlers are not being debited with the whole of the expenditure on the holdings. When the Agricultural Bank took over the holdings, they were re-assessed, and the settlers taken over on the re-assessment. I do not believe there has been much waste of money at Nannup. I do not want to discuss the Nornalup settlement, but I found it necessary to change the whole of the administration. I regret to say that some of the expenditure was incurred on the provision of material that was not at all necessary. Rabbit-proof netting was sent there, and when I took charge of the Lands Department I found that the netting had been erected around the holdings but, in my opinion, erected prematurely, because much of the fencing had been crushed by falling limbs. I gave instructions that any netting not already erected should not be used. I suppose not much of the netting erected would be of any value to-day. The land had not been cleaned up, and the trees had fallen on the netting and destroyed it. The Leader of the Opposition said that I had been very unfair to a friend of mine.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I did not emphasise the "friend."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This friend, like any foe, will get justice from the department. I would make no distinction for this friend or anyone else. If he was refused certain land, there were very good reasons for the refusal. The Leader of the Opposition has promised to supply me with his name; when I have that information, I will make further inquiries. However, the fact that he is said to be a friend shows that he did not receive unfair treatment, for how could one extend unfair treatment to a friend? The Leader of the Opposition was rather ungenerous in his references to my work at the Lands Department for he said, "The Minister cannot have much to do." I admit that in the old days, when in charge of the Lands Department, I had a comparatively easy time for five or six years. I had no trouble in the wheat belt because the condition of the industry was prosperous and there was a heavy demand for land. My only difficulties then were in respect of group settlement matters, and I was able to confine my attention almost exclusively to that phase of the administrative work. The seasons at that time were splendid in the wheat belt and wheat prices averaged about 5s. a bushel. On the other hand, during the past five years I have been inundated with trouble in dealing with farmers who were down and out. If members discuss the situation with any business man, he will tell them that in bad times he is confronted with trouble and worries, but in good times he has little to bother about. For instance, a blackfellow could manage a station in good years, but it takes a capable man to manage it in bad years, when drought conditions prevail. During the past five years there has been an incessant clamour for relief on the part of the farmers, and they have secured relief. I have been personally associated with the reconstruction that has been carried out, and everything done was after consultation with me. Although I do not interfere with the Agricultural Bank Commissioners, they have always discussed with me the policy they desired to pursue. If the Leader of the Opposition should be in charge of the administration of the Lands Department in the years to come, he will probably know what it is to be inundated with requests from people who are down and out. He should not have made that reference to my administration of the Lands Department because, when he was in charge of it he had

to deal with only the Health Department in addition, for Sir James Mitchell administered the affairs of the Agricultural Bank.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Sir James Mitchell was away a great deal.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have been Acting Minister for Mines and Acting Minister for Agriculture when those Ministers have been absent, and I have not made any complaints because of the extra work. I do not say I am over-taxed, but I do claim that any Minister in charge of the Lands Department is called upon to do a man's job. I put in all my time there, sometimes working on Saturdays and occasionally on Sundays. The departmental work is full of difficulties, and the settlers are confronted with many problems. There have been numerous complaints and demands for reconstruction. Those complaints had to be attended to and the reconstruction carried out. A lot of work was involved in those activities.

The Minister for Works: And there were matters affecting bulk handling thrown in.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, that is a small item. The Leader of the Opposition referred to the north-eastern agricultural areas. The Government is extending sympathetic treatment to the settlers in those parts, and be the settler good or bad, we do not blame him for his present position. We are considering his position because of circumstances over which he has had no control. Hence the work of reconstruction is proceeding apace in the north-eastern districts, and the member for Mount Marshall (Mr. Warner) has already mentioned that point. I hope the steps that are being taken will put the settlers in good heart, but that cannot be entirely achieved unless the dry seasons break. Unfortunately, ever since I have been in office, the settlers have experienced unsatisfactory seasons, and that applies to the eastern portions of the wheat belt particularly. A good rainfall and satisfactory prices are the only factors that can make the men on the land satisfied and happy. The Government cannot provide them with the prices they want and certainly cannot make rain. In consequence of the unprecedented drought, the Government has advanced not less than £500,000 to the settlers in the form of relief payments. That is not a bad record. I think the settlers appreciate what has been done for them,

and so far as the Government can, it will continue that assistance until better times arrive.

With regard to the resolution carried at the recent Returned Soldiers' Conference, to which the Leader of the Opposition referred, I do not attach much importance to such a decision, whether it was carried unanimously or otherwise. I would naturally expect that a motion moved with the object of securing something from the Government would be carried unanimously. Who would bother to oppose such a proposal? Such people have no responsibilities to shoulder, and so they adopt the attitude of getting what they can from the Government.

The Minister for Works: Perhaps the member for Mount Marshall was priming them up.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not think he did that. However, the Leader of the Opposition quoted that resolution, but I shall refer to what the R.S.L. executive had to say about the administration in the South-West. That is the better index. The executive members are in close touch with the settlers. They frequently see me and also the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank about conditions affecting the settlers. The organisation has a Lands Committee that devotes the whole of its time to such matters. This is what the executive said in its report:—

The dairying industry provides the one bright spot in the soldier settlers' outlook. The South-West settlers have some troubles, of course, but their position is considerably improved. Any visitor to the South-West must now be struck by the extraordinary progress made. Development of a permanent nature is everywhere evident; stock has not only improved in price, but the quality is a pronounced grade higher. Complaints and discontent have been succeeded by reports of a very encouraging nature, and I think it is not too much to expect that the South-West of our State will carry a big population in years to come.

"Complaints and discontent have been succeeded by reports of a very encouraging nature." That is the experience of the returned soldiers' executive, which deals with the affairs of settlers all the year round. Members will agree with me that we need not attach too much importance to a single resolution, the object of which was to obtain something more from the Government. Moreover, does not a resolution such

as that referred to evidence lack of appreciation on the part of some people? One delegate said that the present Government had always rejected the idea that a man should get a living before he met his obligations, and talked about the Shylock attitude adopted by the Administration. Fancy talking about Shylock with reference to an Administration that has been responsible for writing off £6,000,000 or 30 per cent. of the settlers' liabilities! Does that not show an extraordinary lack of appreciation? I do not think the man who moved that motion was quite in order in advancing such a complaint respecting the men on the land. There are many people who do not wish it to be known that they are doing well. When I was dealing with group settlement matters in the earlier days, I visited the holdings of some of the settlers. I went to the home of a settler who was described as a very good man. He had made a lot of money at contract clearing. On his holding he had 80 acres cleared at the time of the revaluation. I said to him, "How are you getting on?" He replied, "Not too good. I am only carrying two cows on my property." I asked him if the holding would not carry more than that and he replied, "No, it is no good." I said, "We have cleared 80 acres for you; we are not going to do any more. You can do the rest or you can leave the block. You will understand it is not much use clearing land that will carry two cows to 80 acres." He replied, "I admit it looks bad." I told him we were not going any further with it, but he said, "I am clearing another 10 acres; will you pay me to finish that?" I told him that I would do so. The next time I went there I found his holding was well grassed and he was running between 30 and 40 cows. That man has done extremely well, and paid his interest even before the last revaluation. He has now paid up part of his principal and is in a sound position. I do not take any notice of those people who always say they are not doing too well. I find it is a habit of some people to talk like that, and that peculiarity is not confined to farmers. I was not present when the motion was moved, or when reference was made to the "Shylock business of wanting everything back for anything given, and a little more," or I should have had something to say about it. I had intended to provide members with interesting information to

show how several settlers have progressed, but unfortunately I left the letters in my office. I hope to have them later on. However, a week ago I received a letter from an accountant in Bunbury. He said he knew I was interested in the development of the South-West and forwarded me the accounts of two people with whom he was associated to show how they were progressing. One of the men had bought a farm on which he had paid a deposit three years ago, and the farm was now paid for. The other man was working at a profit of £500 a year. That will indicate to members how settlers are progressing in the South-West. I shall produce those two letters, with the audited accounts, so that members may have the details. The probabilities are that if any creditor spoke to those particular individuals and asked them how they were progressing, they would not admit their actual position. As to the statement that the Government had always rejected the idea that a settler should provide for his living before he met his obligations, if the Bank were to allow the living expenses of a settler to be treated preferentially, nothing might be received from him because much of the living of the settler is dependent entirely upon his energy. Some years ago statements were made that certain settlers were starving. Public meetings were held in Perth and agitations were commenced. Again, when the Agricultural Bank Commissioners set about revaluing the holdings, agitations were again started. I went down to the areas to see for myself what the actual conditions were. As a result I could have refuted every complaint that was made. Accompanied by Mr. McLarty, I visited one settlement. We spoke to one woman and asked her if she was starving. She said there was no starvation there. She had a family of six children. To make a long story short, she showed us her cheeses, bacon, hams, and garden produce. She showed me that they had had a crop of potatoes to sell, valued at £80, whereas her neighbour had none to eat.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Before the tea adjournment I was speaking about the resolution that was discussed by the returned soldiers and was referred to by the Leader of the Opposition. I was pointing

out that it was utterly impossible for the bank to gauge what would be a sufficient living allowance for any settler. So much depends upon the settler himself. Some settlers can provide so much more than others and it is impossible for the bank to have any complete knowledge of the circumstances of each case. I quoted instances of some settlers who had nothing while others had an abundance. On that tour we had occasion to visit a settler who said he had no meat for Christmas. The settler told a Press reporter that his poverty was such that he had no meat for Christmas. I said to him, "Why not kill a calf if you had no meat?" He replied, "We do not like veal." I told him that he had said he had no meat, to which he replied, "I had a roast leg of pork in the safe." I asked him why he did not tell the reporter that. He answered, "He did not ask me." So I found that that settler was not without meat of some kind. The reporter related what he thought was the position. I was asked what I was going to do for the man, and I said "Nothing."

Members will realise the position of the bank. One settler has an abundance, and another settler has nothing. To say that the Government is not concerned about this matter is not true. The bank could never undertake the expense of inquiring into all the aspects of a farmer's situation, but some provision is certainly made for all settlers. Whatever provision is possible is made. So far as the finances of the State will allow, help is given. The sustenance rate for married men on the wheatbelt was increased from £6 to £9 a month. We made provision that sufficient chaff should be sent out to keep two cows so that milk would be provided for the children of settlers. The settlers are always allowed to keep sufficient wheat to grist for flour and to feed their fowls and pigs. It cannot be said that this Government has not had sympathy for the farmers. It has given every consideration to their circumstances and has endeavoured to improve them. The Leader of the Opposition said that I was inconsistent in the prices for butterfat that I quoted. I pointed out that prices had risen from 9.9d. per lb. in 1933 to 15.4d. in 1937. He said that I made the statement that during his term of office the price of butterfat was 15d. per lb. That is correct. That was in the year 1931. I thank hon.

members for the remarks made concerning the administration of the department. We do not imagine for a moment that we will receive much appreciation for what we have done. That would be human nature. We know that there are people always ready to belittle the administration; but I have never been prepared to make promises that I have not intended to keep. I believe I can say that whenever I have made a promise I have kept it. I have never stumped the country with a view to endeavouring to undermine the position of members opposite.

Hon. C. G. Latham: No? I can tell you a few things you have said.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: At election time, possibly, but not during any Ministerial visit. I do not want to be too pessimistic about the prospects of the wheatbelt, but the situation is not bright. I have had telephone messages from farmers who are alarmed about the position and except in one or two districts the rainfall has not been satisfactory. However, I do not regard this drought as a normal condition. Climatic conditions must change sooner or later. If during the last few years the wheatgrowers had had good seasons, even with the lower prices that have prevailed, they would have been a happier community with a different outlook. I think I can understand the state of mind of settlers who have faced drought conditions for four years, who have seen their crops germinate and have had hopes built up then to find their hopes frustrated in the end. That must have a very bad effect on the mind of the settler and must give him a jaundiced outlook on life.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: It is heartbreaking.

Mr. Stubbs: You cannot control the weather.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We have done everything possible, and I am satisfied that most people will realise that. If we had had good seasons there would have been an entirely different outlook in Western Australia. I have the greatest sympathy with those settlers. But the bank has never insisted upon receiving interest or that these people should pay back the annual I.A.B. advances. There could not be a more generous Administration than there is to-day. If members opposite were returned to office they might do as well as we have done, but they would need to have a lot of luck. The seasons must change some day, but it is neces-

sary to realise that prices are a disturbing factor in world affairs to-day. The shadow that oppresses us just now in relation to world affairs and which makes the things we are discussing seem comparatively petty, is not likely to improve the market for Australian produce in the future. If the world's prosperity is destroyed, so is ours. We are in the unfortunate position of being a primary producing country dependent on markets abroad. We have not arrived at the stage reached by the United States which has 120,000,000 people, and which can introduce all sorts of financial policies to keep industry going. If we had 30,000,000 or 40,000,000 people we would not need to worry. We would have a home market and could introduce any system of finance to meet the home situation. The United States can do so. That country can do things that no other nation can do, and yet the Government does not escape blame and misunderstanding. We are in an entirely different position from the United States. We depend on the world's markets; we have a small home consumption market, and that market does not give us an opportunity to sell all of our produce. If the same markets existed now as existed before the last Great War or during the 10 years following the war, we would have great opportunities for advancement in Western Australia.

The Leader of the National Party, in announcing the land policy of that party some time ago said that it did not propose to embark upon new settlements but rather to consolidate settlements already existing. That is the policy the Government has pursued. We are consolidating the settlements already existing. Quite a number of new settlers have certainly gone on the land. That is because there has been a much greater demand for group settlement areas. Apart from that, however, our policy is to consolidate the existing settlements, and when the opportunity comes for a Government to establish new settlements, it will have an established industry on which to base the project. In conclusion, I thank members for the absence of uncomplaining remarks.

Vote put and passed.

Votes—Farmers' Debts Adjustment, £6,225; Agricultural Bank, Industries Assistance Board and Soldiers' Land Settlement, £107,150—agreed to.

Vote—Public Works and Buildings, £96,905:

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. H. Millington—Mt. Hawthorn) [7.43]: It is usual when introducing the Revenue Estimates to present a brief resume of the activities of the department. That does not include the work which is financed from the Loan Fund or done under the Main Road Board programme out of the petrol tax fund which at present amounts to three-quarters of a million pounds. Thus the Revenue Estimates do not give an accurate idea of the work carried out by the department, considering that a great deal of money is spent from loan funds that cannot be discussed under the Estimates. The expenditure from revenue last year on ordinary public works and buildings amounted to £93,682. From the revenue votes, for maintenance and other charges, including interest and sinking fund, a total of £186,245 was expended including £125,155 for the Goldfields Water Supply and £61,090 for other hydraulic undertakings. From Loan funds, including expenditure from Loan Suspense Account, the total expenditure was £305,459, making a grand total of £1,085,386. In addition, an amount of £97,124 was expended by the department in connection with works not provided for on the Estimates under my control, as follows:—Commonwealth Employment Scheme grants £214, Hospital Funds, other departments, etc. £96,910; a total of £97,124. A comparison between the total expenditure for the year 1937-38, from all sources, namely £1,182,510, and the total expenditure for the previous year, namely £1,248,620, shows a decrease of £66,119. The dissection of the total expenditure of £1,182,510, plus expenditure on town planning £1,478, a grand total of £1,183,988, is—

	£
Salaries and incidentals	84,930
Harbours and Rivers	133,260
Water Supplies, Drainage and Irrigation	532,212
Roads and Bridges	154,982
Public buildings (including Abattoirs)	207,979
Bulk Handling of Wheat at Bury	56,742
Miscellaneous	13,883
	<hr/>
	£1,183,988

The principal works undertaken by the department last year were—

	£
Fremantle Harbour Works	28,720
Fremantle fishing boat breakwater ..	7,549
Swan River improvements	26,194
Roebourne Harbour facilities (Point Samson jetty)	24,392
Water supplies for Towns:	
Geraldton water supply	11,515
Bridgetown water supply	2,201
Narrogin water supply	1,645
Collie water supply	1,021

Goldfields Water Supply expenditure for the year was—

	£
Further progress in renewing main conduit and steel and wood pipes ..	180,897
Kalgoorlie and Boulder mines main ..	12,656
Yorakine extension	6,206
Norseman water supply reticulation ..	3,105
	<u>£202,864</u>

For water supplies in agricultural areas, drainage and irrigation the expenditure was—

	£
Country tanks	52,509
Drainage and irrigation in the South-West	64,706
	<u>£117,215</u>

Expenditure on water supplies on the Eastern and other goldfields for the year was—

	£
Agnew domestic water supply	550
Youanmi water supply	2,948
Big Bell boring	535
Meekeatharra water supply alterations	1,255
	<u>£5,288</u>

Improvements and additions to abattoirs account for £2,965, and in connection with Roads and Bridges the continuation of the road programme absorbed £154,977.

Expenditure on public buildings for the year was—

	£
New schools and quarters	49,543
Hospitals and institutions	20,104
Police stations, gaols, court houses, and quarters	4,190
Minor works	7,246
	<u>£81,083</u>

I now turn to details of revenue collections for the past financial year. The estimated amount of revenue from all sources

for the year 1937-38 was £389,065. The actual revenue received amounted to £384,003, showing a deficiency of £5,062 on the estimate for the year. The estimated revenue for the year 1938-39, and the actual collections for the previous financial year, are—

	Estimated 1938-39.	Actual 1937-38.
	£	£
Public works	31,000	28,965
Town planning	60	61
Goldfields Water Supply ..	300,000	293,873
Other hydraulic undertakings	62,000	61,104
	<u>£393,060</u>	<u>£384,003</u>

The table shows an increase for the year 1938-39 of £9,057 on the actual amount received last year. If members desire further information, I can supply statements for the year 1937-38 of revenue actually received as compared with the estimated revenue for last year. I submit, at the outset, that this does not give an idea of the activities of the department; but you, Mr. Chairman, would not permit, nor is it desirable that there should be, a discussion of works which will appear on the Loan Estimates. I therefore content myself with presenting these estimates for the year.

MR. CROSS (Canning) [7.55]: On this Vote I wish to draw the Minister's attention to a deputation which waited upon him some 12 or 15 months ago at the Kent street weir, Cannington. Some years ago, by a previous Government, a weir was built over the Canning River. From the inception that work has not proved satisfactory. The Government I refer to tried to do the work cheaply, and it has never been effective. In early summer, due to the fact that the Canning is a tidal river, and the further fact that the salt water backs up at the weir even when full of fresh water, the structure does not satisfactorily keep back the salt water which goes up the river. This has caused considerable losses to settlers in the higher reaches. After numerous complaints, and after attempts by the Public Works Department to remedy the unsatisfactory position, strong representations were made by the settlers. The department did make serious efforts; another couple of planks were put on, and this to some extent prevented

water from going up the river. However, it was not a remedy, because the planks did not keep either the fresh water in or the salt water out. It is a serious matter when salt water gets on young vegetation in market gardens. Men who have spent their life's savings in establishing gardens find themselves faced with a position of the utmost gravity. Every member knows the work such men have to do and the small returns they receive from vegetables sold on the Perth market.

Finally we induced the Minister, accompanied by engineers, to have a look at the weir. We asked for a reconstruction of the weir, and the Minister promised that the work would be done effectively before this summer. We are getting perilously near to the period when high tides will again operate in the Canning River, and as yet the work has not been put in hand. I understand that the engineers have reported to the effect that it is not possible to reconstruct the present weir satisfactorily, and that it will be necessary to construct a new weir at a cost of about £4,000. This is a most important work. The Government and the Public Works Department are looking around for reproductive jobs. This comes under that category. At least one grower who receives, or should receive, benefit from the weir, at times employs up to 70 people, and is one of the largest producers in the greater metropolitan area. He has proved that an Australian can compete even with cheap foreign labour, at the same time producing a better class of vegetable. He has made a success of his job. Again, the livelihood of some hundred settlers is dependent on the weir, and so is, I may add, a considerable proportion of the vegetable and produce supply to the city of Perth. I should like the Minister to tell us when he proposes to go on with the construction of the weir, how long it will be before he intends to carry out the promise he made. This is an important work, and I am hoping the Minister will see to it that the job is put in hand straight away. The present weir is practically useless just now when it is most required. It means that if there be a strong tide up that river—the Minister and his engineers are aware of this—the tidal waters will bank up two or three feet higher at the weir than lower down the river.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: And the salt water will ruin all the vegetables.

Mr. CROSS: If salt water does get beyond the weir, that will be the end of the fresh water, and damage or complete destruction of the whole crop will follow. One grower there has successfully stolen the whole of the South Australian market for the supply of celery in this State. He has made a complete success of it. But unless a new weir is constructed, what he has brought to a successful conclusion will be ruined. Therefore I trust that the Minister will lose no time in fulfilling the promise he made 15 months ago.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [8.3]: I congratulate the Minister for Works on having given some attention to a part of the structure in which we are now working, attention it so badly required. Last session reference was made to the dilapidated state of the building, and it was compared to the ruins of Pompeii. Since then a certain amount of work has been carried out in the building. The time has come, however, when once more it is worth while urging that steps be taken to complete the building. It is the only Parliament House in Australia that remains unfinished.

Mr. Patrick: What about New South Wales?

Mr. NORTH: Our building has been standing too long in an incomplete state. It is true that the part that requires to be completed, in addition to its beautifying the city when it is completed, concerns the electors more than it does ourselves. We have the conveniences that we require.

Members: Where are they?

Mr. NORTH: There is no accommodation at all for the public; there is no place where constituents can be received and attended to. We have a general idea now that a 9-storey building is to be erected near Government House for the convenience of the Government departments.

Mr. Doney: Where are you going to get all the people to occupy the new buildings that are being erected?

Mr. NORTH: We know that a commencement is to be made with the work of erecting new public offices, and perhaps £200,000 will be spent there. That figure is only a guess, but it may not be far out. We could at the same time make a start in the direction of completing Parliament House, and

the cost of finishing the structure could be repaid in, say, three-yearly instalments. As I have said previously, it is a bad advertisement for the State to have a building such as Parliament House is to-day in a dilapidated condition. As it stands, it gives an entirely wrong impression to the public. Unfortunately, too, we know that what should be the attractive part of the building, that which should face the city, is the part that looks so dilapidated. Really, what will eventually be the back entrance was completed first many years ago. This is a question that cannot be put off forever. The amount that will be required to complete the building is small in comparison with the importance of the project. I do not suggest that the completion should be carried out all at once, but it could be extended over two or three years, after a commencement had been made. With the very abstruse methods we have of adjusting accounts, it would not be difficult to arrange finance for the work, and, as I said, it could be repaid in instalments.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: What would you call the expenditure—assistance to an industry?

Mr. NORTH: Yes. There is nothing more important than attracting people to the State, where they might start industries, and the importance of a city is enhanced very largely by its public edifices. We should not be ashamed to complete this building, which in its present state is a very bad advertisement for the State, and gives a poor impression to the stranger. It looks as if we were afraid to face the future. If we go to the suburbs of Perth, Nedlands or Claremont, we see the local bodies housed in excellent buildings. We might ask how they do it, because local bodies have limited funds. One would think they were millionaires and that we were down-and-out. The local bodies are limited to certain taxation, and yet they are able to house themselves comfortably and in decent buildings. The time has arrived when we should proceed in the direction of completing the building in which we are working. Some might think that a section would be up in arms against us, but that is too small a matter to frighten us any longer. Therefore I strongly urge the Chamber to impress upon the Government the need to proceed with this good work as soon as possible.

The next matter to which I wish to refer relates to the Town Planning Vote. The Town Planning Commissioner has shown by his activities that he is a very ambitious person, and is not afraid to criticise when criticism is necessary. The matter I wish to bring before the notice of the Minister is the wretched appearance of the structure situated in Forrest Place next to the General Post Office. At the present time it is occupied as an hotel, but in the original scheme of things it was to be the third majestic structure beside the Commonwealth Bank and the Post Office. As far back as 25 years ago it was suggested that some day there would be a Federal Customs House erected on that block. I should like to know whether the Minister has any information to give the House on this question. Does he know whether the Customs House idea still exists or whether the old hotel that is there now is to remain?

Hon. C. G. Latham: It is Federal territory.

Mr. NORTH: If the Town Planning Board has no power of control over buildings that are the property of the Federal Government, I would like to see that power given to it. Why should that part of the city be permitted to remain an eyesore for so long? If there is to be a Federal Customs House erected on that block, let the Federal authorities proceed with the work immediately. If they are not prepared to do so, then we should demand something else be done with the site, because it is entirely spoiling that part of Perth, from the point of view of the tourist, and tourists are among the people we wish to attract to our shores. Moreover, in these days of air liners, world tourists who visit us get a wrong impression from the air when they see hovels of that type adjoining our palatial buildings. It should be our desire to make everything as attractive as possible for tourists, because we never know when a man may come along with £50,000 or £100,000 to invest in new industries. He certainly will not do so if he sees no evidence of progress, particularly in the direction of our buildings in the city.

Now a few words about the parish pump! I am hoping that the Minister for Works will be able to assist the Minister for Education in the direction of completing the Claremont school grounds. I urge the Min-

ister for Works to make a sum of money available as soon as possible to put those grounds into proper repair.

MR. DONEY (Williams - Narrogin) [8.11]: The member for Claremont (Mr. North) spoke just now as if we had millions of money to spare. He cannot be aware of the condition of the Treasury; he certainly cannot have listened to the speech delivered by the Premier a few days ago. The hon. member has a way of side-tracking the depression, and of giving voice to proposals for the expenditure of money we do not possess on buildings that we do not urgently need. I do not mind admitting that what he suggests with regard to the completion of Parliament House is desirable enough, and that if we had the money to spare the work could be carried out. In the circumstances, however, and having regard to economic troubles likely to arise in the rural areas in the near future, I could point to a score of different directions in which the money he proposes should be spent on buildings in the city could be used to better account. We are certainly proud of the building and would be prouder still if it were bigger and better; but it cannot be said that we are suffering any great inconvenience by its incompleteness. In any case, we should proceed with the spending of money very carefully, and only carry out works in the order of their urgency. Plainly there is no urgency about the completion of the building we now occupy. I am at one with the hon. member in complimenting the Minister for Works on having carried out certain repairs to Parliament House, repairs that have been necessary for a long while. Other than that, there are certain matters to which I shall refer when the sectional Estimates come up for consideration. One matter about which I shall speak will be the Narrogin court house. Various Ministers for Works have received deputations on the subject for the past 20 years, I dare say. All the representative bodies in Narrogin, the municipal council, the road board, the Chamber of Commerce and others have for the past 20 years or more agitated for the sale of the court house site, the demolition of the existing building and the erection of a new and modern structure in a more suitable part of the town. This very plainly built old structure is of historic interest, but is unsuitable for the purpose of a court house. The towns-

folk are accustomed to seeing the old building, and do not mind having it there. Visitors to the town, however, regard it as a sort of joke that so mean a structure should occupy so valuable a piece of land. I believe it is Narrogin's oldest building, and was erected by a busy-bee of pioneers in the early days as an agricultural hall.

The Minister for Mines: Do you think the Historical Society would permit it to be demolished?

MR. DONEY: We are just now on the point of establishing a branch of the Historical Society in Narrogin. No doubt the society would be interested in this very old building. There may be a tinge of regret if it is demolished. All will agree, however, that a new court house should be erected close to the police station. As things are at present, those who are awaiting trial have to pass through the main street to the court house. If the trial discloses that they are innocent, it means that they have undergone an ignominy they do not deserve. Up to within a year ago a good deal of competition awaited the sale of the site, but a few months ago that competition had materially decreased. I am afraid, unless the sale is proceeded with quickly, possibly no effort will be made to secure the site. I have represented that aspect to the Minister, and I think he is seized of the fact that from the point of view of the Treasury and economy the sale should be proceeded with quickly. Recently the matter was advanced another stage by the question of the sale being brought into contact with the Estimates. I am very anxious that the sale should be carried through without delay, and would appreciate an admission from the Minister that my idea of the urgency of the project has his concurrence. I shall deal with other matters as we come to the votes concerning them.

MR. McLARTY (Murray-Wellington) [8.20]: Recently the Disabilities Commission urged us to spend our money on reproductive works. Many opinions are held as to what constitutes a reproductive work. Great difficulty is experienced at times in deciding the question in view of the many aspects that relate to it. Planning ahead in respect of our public works is a vital necessity. We should know what works the Government proposes to put in hand, and we should also know the order of their urgency. At present, because of the un-

settled conditions in the world, any plan would be difficult to formulate. There is a danger that our plans may be upset. I know that all members are filled more with the idea of helping the Empire should the need arise. On the other hand, the time is opportune for the appointment of a special committee to examine the position with respect to our public works. This is no new idea, but it is nevertheless a good one. Members would thus have an opportunity to carry some of the responsibility. The committee could call evidence and examine all proposals that were submitted. The Minister would know in what order works were to be carried out. Public works that had been completed could be examined and their usefulness estimated. I should like to hear what class of work the Government regards as reproductive. He might also state in what order of urgency he places them. Members should know in advance what public works the Government proposes to carry out. Great public works should never be sprung upon the people, who should be prepared for them in advance. The claim was made that we must always have an active public works policy, by means of which to employ the large numbers of men who are unable to obtain employment except through Government activities. If that is the position, there is all the more necessity for planning our works ahead, and knowing in what parts of the State they are likely to be carried out. We have just about completed our railways, our main roads are well advanced, our great harbour works are almost completed, and many of our public works are finished.

Mr. Cross: A great deal of reclamation work remains to be done.

Mr. McLARTY: Yes, but we should know well ahead what we intend to do. Requests for public works are ever with us and are numerous. Their reproductive nature is another question. I believe one of the safest undertakings we can engage in is the storage of water. We have only to look at our present irrigation areas to appreciate that. No agricultural part of the State has made greater strides than have the irrigation areas. They have been responsible for the establishment of butter factories and condensed milk factories, and they have gone ahead with production by leaps and bounds. At present they are in a serious position. I have only risen to ask the

Minister to make some pronouncement of policy as to the future of these districts. Some time ago the people of Harvey presented the Minister with a wonderful case. He has had an opportunity to study it. One paragraph of this case states—

The cold hard fact to be faced at the present time is that the existing reservoir, designed and notified to the public as capable of irrigating 9,300 acres, cannot irrigate more than 4,000 acres (and this area without security), while the potential area to be watered is approximately 12,000 acres.

The tendency in all irrigation areas in the world is to increase the number of waterings. This has been proved in the Eastern States, and is the case in Western Australia. The existing reservoir is incapable of coping with that extra watering, and the pastures in the areas in question are suffering in consequence. It is a long time since the case was presented to the Minister. I shall be glad if he will tell us what his policy is with respect to these areas.

I should now like to refer to the Waroona district. A letter from the Chairman of the Drakesbrook Road Board was recently published in the "West Australian." The chairman pointed out it was not possible to water to anything like the extent that was desired by the settlers concerned. The shortage of water is having a most detrimental effect upon both those irrigation districts. I am afraid if additional storage is not provided in the near future the areas will suffer very serious loss.

During the last three or four years hundreds of thousands of pounds have been spent on drainage in the South-West. In the main the expenditure has proved highly satisfactory, and I have no doubt the work will be reproductive. Areas that were flooded and not producing anything are now yielding excellent pastures, almost equal to anything that could be found anywhere in the State. These wet areas will all grow subterranean clover and pasture if properly drained. I express my satisfaction with the drainage work that has been carried out in the South-West, and have no doubt it will prove reproductive. Some farmers, however, really practical people, claim that certain of these areas are being overdrained. This is quite possible, and I would suggest to the Minister for Works that he put this to the officers

of his department, who would of course have to work in conjunction with the officers of the Department of Agriculture, in order to ascertain if there is any danger of over-draining some of this country, and what particular area would be affected. I repeat, I appreciate the drainage work that has been carried out in the South-West.

MR. NEEDHAM (Perth) [8.31]: I was interested in the speech of the member for Claremont (Mr. North). He stressed the necessity for completing the building in which we, as a Parliament, assemble to make the laws of the State. This is not the first time I have heard a plea made for the completion of Parliament House. My memory carries me back to the time when the present member for Guildford-Midland was occupying in the Daglish Government the position now occupied by the member for Mt. Hawthorn (Hon. H. Millington). Many similar requests were then made to complete the building as it was originally designed. The reply at that time was that the money required to complete the building could be better spent in other directions. Many years have since elapsed, but I believe the present Minister for Works would give the same reply.

Mr. North: It is a good guess.

MR. NEEDHAM: The Minister would reply that the money could be well spent, or better spent, on reproductive works.

Member: He would not be far out, either.

MR. NEEDHAM: I am not concerned so much about the completion of the building as it was originally planned, as I am about that section of the building which I think could be made more habitable and more comfortable, and which houses our staff, the "Hansard" staff, the clerical staff, and our typists. They have suffered long in a climate such as this in the present iron building. It is Hades in summer—that is a mild term to use—and it is worse than a refrigerating chamber in winter. However pressed the Minister may be for cash, and I know he has to depend upon the mercy of the Treasurer, I think sufficient money could be found at least to make the quarters where these men live and work more habitable and more congenial. We must realise that the "Hansard" staff are officers of Parliament. Something should be done to make their working conditions more tolerable. The

member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. McLarty) referred to the necessity for a long range policy of public works. I agree with him. I am sure the Minister agrees with him, too. When speaking on the Address-in-reply, I mentioned the necessity for a long-range policy of public works not only for this State, but for the Commonwealth. I suggested that the Premiers of the States, with the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, should get together to map out a policy of works that could be put into operation should we be so unfortunate as again to meet with an economic storm such as that from 1930 onwards. The Government must recognise its responsibility to the people, who have the right to work and live. The people should, however, be put to work that will be reproductive. Time and again in this Chamber the Government has been criticised because it has spent loan money on unproductive works. The member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) vigorously castigated the Government for having done that. However, the necessity was such that the Government was compelled to find work for men and women, and much of that work, undoubtedly, was not of a reproductive nature. It is, I think, incumbent on the Minister for Works to try to map out some policy for the future, and he might consider the advisability of getting into touch with private enterprise in the building trade. If the Department of Public Works and the various builders in the State got together, some arrangement could be made for continuity of work. There need not be too much work to-day and none to-morrow. Private enterprise might engage a certain number of men and when their jobs were completed, the Department of Public Works could engage those men on other work, and vice versa.

Another suggestion made by the member for Murray-Wellington is the appointment of a committee to assist Parliament in the planning of works. That has been tried and proved successful by the Commonwealth Government. The Commonwealth Parliament had a public works committee for many years. I served on it for three years myself. It was abolished during the depression years, but subsequently it was re-suscitated. My three years' experience on that committee convinced me that the committee saved the Commonwealth Govern-

ment a very considerable amount of money by its investigation of proposed works. The committee inquired into works the cost of which would be £25,000 or over. Before any work involving such expenditure could be commenced, it had to be investigated by the committee, who reported on it to Parliament. During the time the committee was in existence, it saved the Commonwealth Government millions of pounds. A committee of such a nature would be very helpful. I know the Minister will say that we cannot complete Parliament House, but I think something should be done to make the conditions of our staff more tolerable.

HON. C. G. LATHAM (York) [8.38]: I hope the Minister will be able to tell us what buildings the Government proposes to erect. I saw in the Press recently that a start is to be made near Government House with a block of buildings. He might take the Committee into his confidence and state what the Government proposes to do there. I know that for a long time alterations to the Land Titles Office and the Department of Agriculture have been considered to be necessary. I do not know whether the Government intends to bring down a Bill to authorise the erection of and additions to the buildings I have mentioned, or whether the expenditure will be made from loan funds, but whatever is done, I hope the Minister will take the opportunity of informing the Committee what the Government proposes to do.

I desire to refer to another matter which has been mentioned, and that is Parliament House. This building has been open for 35 years; and a galvanised structure was erected to tide over the staff for one or two years. While I agree that this galvanised structure is not altogether falling to pieces, I point out that the roof is rusted through in places. The time has arrived when some small amount of money should be spent yearly to make provision for additional accommodation. To-day a room is not available for a party to hold a meeting. The suggestion would not represent anything extraordinary if it were proposed that additional accommodation should be provided. Then, again, the room provided for the Leader of the Opposition is bitterly cold in winter and extremely hot in summer. It is really an enclosure of portion of a verandah. I have a great deal of consideration for any

member who, as Leader of the Opposition, has to work almost continuously in such a room. I am not complaining personally, but I know the conditions that exist are most unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, that inconvenience is not any worse than that experienced by the "Hansard" staff and other members of the staff. In the summer months, one can hardly bear to stay in their rooms during the heat of the day. If a small sum could be set aside annually for the provision of decent accommodation for the staff, the money would be well spent. Parliament House is situated somewhat out of the city. When distinguished visitors inspect the building and note the galvanised iron annexe, they do not regard it as a good advertisement for the State. The prosperity of a country is so often assessed by the type of its buildings, public and otherwise. Naturally, I do not desire money spent that should be used for educational purposes or for the assistance of those engaged in our industries, but I really think we could spend a small amount annually to increase the accommodation available at Parliament House.

Mr. North: The State was in a very small way when the building was erected.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: For 35 years the temporary building has housed the staff, and I feel sure that the Minister recognises the position. There seems to be a horror at the thought of doing anything towards the completion of Parliament House. The building does not belong to us; it belongs to the people. It is supposed to be the first building in the city, although it is a poor example of the type of building in Perth. Members can see in Mr. Speaker's room the plans of a most elaborate building.

Mr. Marshall: I do not think the accommodation indicated there would be sufficient now.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not think any harm would be done if £10,000 were set aside annually for a building scheme to provide sufficient accommodation for the staff to enable them to work under reasonable conditions. Such a provision would also enable rooms to be erected where members could meet their constituents and hold meetings from time to time. There seems to be an impression abroad that we do not desire to make any alterations to Parliament House, but I think members who have spoken will agree that there is necessity for work

along those lines. The fact is that the galvanised iron annexe will have to be removed or rebuilt, and it would be wiser to spend the money in providing a permanent structure. The expenditure would be justified in the long run.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [8.45]: I would be remiss if I did not express the appreciation of the residents of the goldfields regarding the action of the Works Department in reconditioning the principal reticulation mains leading from the Mt. Charlotte reservoir in Kalgoorlie. Those pipes had been in use since the inauguration of the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme, and had become so corroded with rust that not only was the water pressure being interfered with, but the supply was an absolute bugbear to housewives. When they desired to do their weekly washing, they drew off a supply of reddish-brown fluid that very often interfered with culinary requirements as well.

Mr. Lambert: Are you sure it was water?

Mr. STYANTS: On some occasions it was a question whether it was water or mud. The goldfields people have to pay charges for their water supply which, if levied upon metropolitan residents, would be deemed extortionate. I have heard people in Perth complain about paying 1s. per 1,000 gallons, whereas the goldfields people have to pay 6s. 9d. per thousand. Even so, that rate has obtained only comparatively recently for formerly we had to pay 7s. 3d. per 1,000 gallons for household purposes. While we would not expect to have water delivered 375 miles from the source for the same charges as are levied for water delivered within a few miles of the reservoir, it has been felt that the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme should have been treated as a national undertaking on the same lines as the railways. The goldfields have been responsible for providing so much wealth for the State that the people should not, in justice, have been called upon to foot the bill for the whole cost of the scheme and for its repair.

Mr. Lambert: They have not been required to pay the whole cost because 50 per cent. of the sinking fund was paid from Consolidated Revenue.

Mr. STYANTS: I am aware that approximately 50 per cent. of the loan that was redeemed in London was contributed from Consolidated Revenue. Nevertheless,

I believe the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme is the only scheme of its kind in the State that has definitely paid its way.

Member: It paid for itself.

Mr. STYANTS: No, because 50 per cent. of the money required to redeem the loan five or six years ago was derived from Consolidated Revenue. The cheapest rate at which water is supplied on the goldfields is 2s. 6d. per 1,000 gallons. While it is perhaps difficult in these times of financial stress, to suggest that any commodity should be delivered by the Government at less than cost price, I think that the people on the goldfields should be supplied with water at actual cost price. The service should not be looked upon as a source from which to augment Consolidated Revenue. The goldfields people certainly appreciate the action of the Minister in reducing the charge from 7s. 3d. to 6s. 9d. per 1,000 gallons, and in reconditioning and relining the pipes. The latter work will prove a boon to housewives from the standpoint of a clean water supply. I also wish to voice my appreciation of the work carried out in connection with the erection of new school fences and in the renovation of school buildings. Both fences and buildings had suffered from dry rot and had been attacked by white ants. They had been erected 35 or 36 years ago, and would normally have been due for renovation in the period from 1920 to 1925 when the mining industry experienced its decline. It was thought by pessimists that expenditure on such work at that period was not warranted. When the mining industry picked up again, and the life of the goldfields seemed to have been prolonged for many years, it was pleasing to the residents to see that the Works Department were prepared to rehabilitate these buildings and put the fences in a safe and reasonably good condition. The shelter sheds of the Kalgoorlie central school had fallen into a dangerous condition. Some of the bearers in the roof were split, and many of the boards from the side of the play house had rotted away through dry rot. The cement floors had broken to such an extent that children were being injured whilst running around in the wet weather, through falling into holes where the cement had disintegrated. Usually I find myself in this frame of mind when I have a complaint to make against the department. It is however my duty as a rep-

representative of the goldfields to say that we are particularly pleased with the work that has been done for us by the department.

On the Address-in-reply I said I considered that something should be done to provide better accommodation within Parliament House so that members might interview their constituents under suitable conditions. The lack of accommodation of this sort has always struck me very forcibly. If one of my constituents came to see me on any day on which the House was sitting, and arrived here after 3 o'clock, it is doubtful whether I would be able to find a room in which to converse with him. Certainly we have a stranger's room, but if anyone else were in occupation of it I would probably have to go out on the pavement to discuss business possibly of a private and confidential nature.

Mr. Lambert: Or to King's Park.

Mr. STYANTS: I might have to take my constituents on the grass in front of Parliament House. Not only is that demeaning to the member, but it is unsatisfactory to the elector. There is always a chance that one may be able to take one's constituent along the corridor, get into some hole or corner, and discuss business with him there. There is a danger in that, particularly if the visitor happens to be a young and attractive female. Recently a social purist has arisen in our midst. Possibly, therefore, if the member for Kalgoorlie were seen sitting in a corner talking confidentially to a young and attractive female it might be thought he was forming some unfortunate social alliance.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: We know you too well for that.

Mr. STYANTS: It might be all right for the hon. member, whose social reputation has always been like Caesar's wife, above reproach. Some of us have a social reputation which perhaps is somewhat shaky, and this might shatter the little reputation we have.

Mr. Sampson: It would liven up the electioneering outlook.

Mr. STYANTS: Accommodation should be provided so that it would not be necessary for members to discuss business with a constituent outside the building, or in circumstances which do not add to the prestige of this Assembly. I also wish to draw atten-

tion to what I have always regarded as the most unsightly portion of Parliament House, namely, the unhygienic and uncomfortable buildings, the corrugated iron section, provided for the employees. The structure is most unsuitable, very hot and very unsightly. As pointed out by the member for Claremont, dilapidated buildings are no recommendation from the point of view of tourists. Neither are they any advertisement for Western Australia. When a member brings visitors to Perth they naturally want to see the Legislative halls, but they find the building in a half-finished state. They ask how long this state of affairs has prevailed, and are told it has prevailed ever since the building was erected. If a commercially-minded person went about Perth and found a half completed building sheltering a business that had been in operation for 35 years, and that it had pieces of hoop iron hanging from the sides, awaiting the day when the edifice would be completed, they would not form a high opinion of the prosperity of that business. That is the impression created in the minds of tourists and business and commercial men when they are shown over Parliament House. When it is necessary to explain that the building is not yet completed, that it has not even reached its foundation stone, and that we have to grow a creeper to cover the foundation stone, they naturally wonder whether we are a progressive community or not.

Mr. North: It certainly creates a bad impression.

Mr. STYANTS: I agree. Not only visitors but the people of the State expect something better of the buildings in which the laws governing them are made. For these reasons I hope some additions will be made to the building. I am glad the Leader of the Opposition has associated himself with the suggestion that better accommodation should be provided. If we cannot get the whole thing done in 12 months we could have a progressive building scheme under which so much work could be allotted to each year. The time has long since passed when we should put up with the lack of accommodation we have. I hope the Government will be able to find, if not the whole of the amount with which to complete the job according to the original plans,

at all events a certain amount each year so that a progressive building programme may be carried out.

MR. LAMBERT (Yilgarn-Coolgardie) [8.58]: I am glad the question of the completion of Parliament House has been raised. From time to time the House Committee has discussed the inadequacy of the accommodation in Parliament House. Within the limits of our resources it has been the desire of the Committee to give such accommodation as it could. Our limitations are of a financial nature. Unless the Government can place the money at the disposal of the Committee for the extra accommodation it is futile for us to attempt to do much in the matter. Out of our own votes, we have made certain small additions for the comfort and convenience of members, but what we have done has been limited. It is a shameful thing that we cannot do more. I am glad the Leader of the Opposition referred to the accommodation for our officers having been neglected for so many years. Particularly is the accommodation disgraceful when we remember that we have lady members in the House. Of necessity they must meet and interview and sometimes entertain their friends. The accommodation is such that it would not do credit to an ordinary nigger's camp. I hope the Minister for Works will be induced to undertake the completion of this building along the original lines. A certain amount of money should be set aside and progressive improvements made to the building with a view to its completion within a certain number of years. Only a few years ago it was necessary to provide one or two more rooms. The Country Party some years ago had no accommodation in which to hold meetings. I had the matter discussed at a meeting of the House Committee, and was successful in having a room provided for Country Party members, in which they could hold Caucus meetings, or whatever they call them. Following that, arose the necessity for suitable accommodation for the Leader of the Opposition. The Public Works Department accordingly proceeded to obtain the most unsuitable material, to build what could only be likened to an ordinary decent stable, if it would serve such a purpose. The department built two rooms with asbestos and other boards I do not know anything about. The Leader of the Opposition says that the place is almost a refrigerator in

winter time and is very hot in the summer months. It is altogether unsuitable as accommodation wherein to carry out ordinary work. I happened to stay there for as long as my restless spirit would allow me to stay and I found it particularly cold in winter and uncomfortably hot in summer. When one experiences varying degrees of heat and cold, one never knows what indiscretions one may commit. I hope that by all sections of this Chamber and of another place, sufficient emphasis will be placed upon the necessity for something being done definitely and quickly to improve the existing conditions. Apart from additional accommodation for members, more writing-rooms should be provided, and there should be additional telephone services and services of other kinds for those called upon to visit Parliament House.

Fancy the walls of the rooms occupied by the "Hansard" staff being constructed of paper boards! One of these days someone will be inspired to emulate Guy Fawkes, and then perhaps we shall get a new building. I hope the Minister will be seized with the necessity for an improvement. The matter has been discussed year in and year out. Rooms of the same type as the old iron buildings that were used 25 years ago as camps in the constituency of the member for Kalgoorlie are used to house "Hansard" and many of our valuable records. Officers have to work in accommodation of that sort from the middle of the year to the end of December when the House adjourns.

Mr. Hegney: Would you recommend the installation of wireless and loud speakers in the Chamber?

MR. LAMBERT: I would not mind that, so long as none of my relations tuned in. I should be pleased to have one of the contributions of the hon. member broadcast to the people in his constituency. At present it is almost impossible for a member to have a private discussion over the telephone within the precincts of the House. The room of the Leader of the Opposition is separated from the corridor merely by a window, and people outside can hear what is said within so that there is no privacy whatever. The Press has a miserable room upstairs, and the reporters have better accommodation when they retreat from here and get away from much of what they have to suffer as a result of listening to the

speeches of hon. members. If the people in the kitchen are grilling luscious steak and onions one is warned of the fact about an hour before the meal is served. The odour generally intrudes itself into the corridor long before mealtime, so that one has no need to have steak and onions for tea, because it has already been served up in the corridor. I was speaking to the President of the Legislative Council about the matter the other day. The subject has been discussed, not once, but for the last 20 years—ever since I was a boy. If discussions could build brick walls and provide tiled roofs we would have here a building like some of the mansions that exist elsewhere.

MR. HEGNEY (Middle Swan) [9.9]: I should like to bring to the notice of the Minister for Works the fact that the time is overdue for his department to improve the main road at the Rivervale crossing. In no other Australian capital will so dangerous a stretch of main road be found as that at Rivervale. Elsewhere, similar roads are either carried under the railway line or taken over it. This improvement should have been effected here long ago, especially as the work would give considerable employment and the Government is at its wit's end to find metropolitan employment for men with a reasonable case for it. I have been on various deputations to Ministers in connection with this matter. One waited upon Mr. Willecock when he was Minister for Railways, the Perth City Council and the Belmont Park Road Board joining in a request for a subway. The approach to the railway lends itself to the easy construction of a subway, which moreover would effect a definite improvement in the highway there. This request definitely interests the whole State, because country people coming to Perth are unaware of the dangerous character of the crossing. I trust the Minister will give prompt attention to the matter. The road system should likewise be improved on the other side of the crossing. This matter has been submitted to the Minister for Railways with a view to the straightening-out of the road over the Belmont railway line near Whatley, from Newman's corner to Cresco. It may be contended that the local authorities receive traffic fees for doing this class of work, but the amount received by the Belmont Road Board would be utterly insuffi-

cient for the purpose. Whilst the main road is supposed to carry the greatest load of traffic, a census extending over a week has shown that the flow of vehicles from Guildford is now greater than that over the Helena River bridge and the Bassendean bridge, 54 per cent. of the traffic being from Guildford as against 46 per cent. from the Highway. The matter was very fully discussed four years ago, and the indications are that traffic on the road system is just as important as traffic on the main highways. Here again is a work that would give metropolitan employment.

Yet another work of the same character is the improvement of Bayswater school grounds. The Works Department has drawn up a plan for the purpose, and the matter has received attention from the Minister for Education. It has been before the Works Department almost ever since I have represented the Middle Swan electorate. All the authorities admit the need for doing something, but not one of them is prepared to do it. The school is attended by some 500 children, and the schoolground is one of the worst in the metropolitan area. I trust the Minister for Works will give attention to the various matters I have mentioned.

MRS. CARDELL-OLIVER (Subiaco) [9.15]: I desire to bring under the Minister's notice the existence of a swamp at Jolimont, concerning which a deputation has already waited on him. The people affected have asked me to stress the point that the Government owns 19 blocks of land under the swamp, which in summer is infested with mosquitoes and is a detriment to the health of the children. The surrounding houses are all small and are occupied by relief workers, people on sustenance, or people with small incomes. As has been mentioned here repeatedly, such people have large families; in this instance the children have little space in which to play, and therefore play in and around the swamp. It would not cost the Government much to clean the swamp, remove the dead trees, and make the locality at least presentable. What I have suggested would at least clear away mosquitoes and other pests.

Mr. Cross: What is the municipality doing about it?

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: It is the Government, and not the municipality, that owns the 19 blocks under the swamp. The people

owning the other blocks under the swamp are in various parts of Australia and difficult to locate. As this appears to be a day of general thanks, I take the opportunity to thank the Minister for the sewerage works which have been carried out at Jolimont. The people there are grateful to the hon. gentleman. The ground at the back of the Jolimont school, which is attended by over 600 children, is not in a good state, although something is being done to it now. I fully realise that all our schools want attention, and that the Government has not a great deal of money. Nevertheless, there are large holes in the ground at this particular school, and children might suffer accidents which would call for compensation. Reverting to the swamp, if the Government fulfilled its responsibility, the municipality would probably clean up the remaining 30 blocks in the swamp.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. H. Millington—Mt. Hawthorn—in reply) [9.19]: After hearing a description of these Houses of Parliament this evening, I wish to point out that I am not solely responsible, though willing to accept my fair share of responsibility. I may add that I hardly recognised the description. The Kent-street weir led off the discussion, but it will be realised that weirs are not built from revenue. I did promise that the present weir would be renovated; and now I find that a new weir, to cost £4,000 is wanted. That is a matter I shall have to discuss with the Treasurer. The member for Claremont desires to be informed whether the Town Planning Commissioner can instruct the Federal Government to demolish a hotel and replace it by a new building. The Town Planning Commissioner is a very strong man and seems to have great powers, or usurps them, but I do not think he has power to order the demolition of the building referred to. If a new building is to be constructed, he might have to approve of its layout. The next point was raised by the member for Claremont (Mr. North). While he was speaking, the Minister for Education informed me that the school grounds at Claremont will be drained shortly.

Mr. North: Thank you very much.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: So I hope that difficulty will be overcome. The member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Doney) mentioned the court buildings at Narrogin.

I understand the department is endeavouring to dispose of the old courthouse and station, which are erected on valuable land, and to purchase a cheaper block of land on which to erect suitable buildings. I have consulted with the Minister for Justice. He is not quite sure what stage has been reached, but I know that what I have stated has been contemplated for some time. We should sell the good block of land with the bad buildings and get—

Mr. Marshall: A bad block of land for good buildings.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, another suitable block of land for the new buildings. I hope we shall be able to do so. Now I come to those matters upon which I have been asked to make a pronouncement. I have made a note of them: First, our works programme, I have to outline a policy; second, a long-range policy of public works in their order of urgency; the Leader of the Opposition wants to know something about public offices; third, we should appoint a works committee consisting of members of this House; fourth, Parliament House should be completed. Those are the main matters; other matters I may have forgotten. Before dealing with the main questions, I shall deal with the Jolimont land. I did receive a deputation from the civic authorities, introduced by the member for Subiaco (Mrs. Cardell-Oliver). The fact is that the matter is entirely a municipal responsibility, but out of the goodness of my heart I agreed to snag the swamp. With regard to public offices, a pronouncement will be made by the Premier. For some years past we have had a committee dealing with the needs of departments for additional and better accommodation. The most urgent needs are those of the Agricultural Department and the records department.

Hon. C. G. Latham: And the Land Titles Office.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: That also is considered urgent. I know the Premier regards it as even more urgent than the Agricultural Department.

Hon. C. G. Latham: It is.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I would not say that in the presence of the Minister for Agriculture. The matter has been before the Public Works Department, and Mr. Clare, the principal architect, has,

I understand, the plans in a well advanced state. I spoke to him recently and when I consulted the Premier, he said, "This is a matter on which I should consult Parliament." The Premier, no doubt, will shortly bring the matter before Parliament. A work of that magnitude he thought should first be referred to Parliament.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I thought he might do that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The plans are well advanced, and if we can settle the rather delicate question of the site there should not be much delay in proceeding with those buildings. I couple that up with the suggestion that Parliament House should be completed. Were it not for the fact that better accommodation for the Public Service is so urgently required, that work could be undertaken, especially as the House seems to be united in declaring that the work is urgent.

Members: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It would provide good work for the building trade. It is needed and can be justified. I remember the late Mr. Davy had the courage to bring the matter before the House seriously, and at that time it was well received by both sides of the House. The accommodation for the "Hansard" staff and the rather intimate matter referred to by the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. Styants) should receive attention, if there is what I might term a half-way house in that respect.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I think you could do a portion of the work.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I shall certainly refer the matter to the Treasurer and also obtain a report.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Finish one wing at a time.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think we should do something better to accommodate the "Hansard" staff and others. We have been carrying out some renovations.

Mr. Sampson: The plan of Parliament House is now out of date.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: At present I can hold out no hope that the completion of the building will be seriously undertaken.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I do not think we can do that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Members will agree with me that it is imperative

the Government should make a start with the public buildings.

Mr. Sampson: New plans should be prepared. The fashion in architecture has changed since the plan was drawn.

The Minister for Mines: Not for the better.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not think we would be fussy if we could get these buildings completed.

Mr. Sampson: The original design would now prove too costly.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Undeniably, we are behind with our works programme, but that is due to circumstances over which we have no control; otherwise the completion of Parliament House would have been undertaken long ago. I do not think even those who hold a brief for country works would object to such completion. However, that work will have to wait, although a very good case has been made out for it. I do not know that I have any objection to a parliamentary committee of works.

Hon. C. G. Latham: We tried to appoint it once before, but the members would not agree.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: An impression seems to exist that Governments have usurped more control than has been the case in the past. Under our system of government, that is not what happens. I have attended large conferences, and have found that if work is to be done, it must be referred to committees. If an attempt is made to get a great deal of work done by a conference of 150 members, it will be found that not much headway will be made. The work requires concentration and is given to committees to undertake. That is what Parliament does. Under our system, whether we realise it or not, the work of the House is given to a committee, which is called the Government.

Hon. C. G. Latham: On which the Opposition is not represented.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Government is responsible for the work and for carrying out the wishes of Parliament. It must carry out the wishes of Parliament, because it cannot live without the backing of Parliament. The statement has been made that Parliament was ignored in these matters; but Parliament has decided how they shall be carried out and how its powers shall

be delegated. At the same time, I am aware that public works committees have functioned successfully in the Federal arena, although I do not know that the economies mentioned by the member for Perth (Mr. Needham) were so noticeable. I have recollections of works that could well have been supervised by a committee. A notable instance was the Henderson base. I do not know whether the member for Perth (Mr. Needham) can say that that undertaking was supervised by the Public Works Committee.

Mr. Needham: No.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Even if it had been, it will be realised that Government policy is at times enforced in respect of such important works. I appreciate the fact that Mr. Gregory, M.H.R., as chairman of the Federal Public Works Committee, carried out excellent work and examined many projected public undertakings throughout Australia with beneficial results. Although the Federal Government functions over a much larger area than does the State Government, we in Western Australia also have a system of committees. The member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. McLarty) referred to drainage and irrigation matters. To deal with questions affecting water supplies, we have a committee comprising the hydraulic engineers and representatives of the Agricultural Department. That committee handles questions regarding hydraulics, irrigation and drainage. Proposals submitted to the Government are examined and recommendations are made in the order of urgency. From the standpoint of the most urgent work to be undertaken in Western Australia, we must have regard to the fact that our railways already exist and no one would seriously suggest extensions in that direction. We have our road policy and the amount of £750,000 from the Federal Aid Roads Agreement is ample to maintain that policy. Therefore, in speaking of the expenditure of loan funds proper, I should say that the provision of country water supplies and irrigation works would be first in the order of importance for the Government to undertake. I say that, notwithstanding the fact that it cannot be shown that any of the irrigation undertakings are payable propositions. I would not like to inform the Committee of the actual losses on certain irrigation schemes. Nevertheless, I can state that in one instance it cost 88s.

an acre to put water on the land, and we collect from the producer 13s. per acre per annum. Naturally we do not consider an irrigation proposition on that basis, but from the standpoint of the indirect benefit to the State. If, as a result of an irrigation scheme, an area becomes prolific, is thoroughly developed, and towns spring up as in the South-West, where we expect our population to be carried in the future, then instead of trains passing through stations with a whistle, we will find them pulling up and hauling loads of produce away. Thus the State will in time reap the benefit of the expenditure. In a country like Western Australia where, as His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor says, we have the right sun through six months of the year, the conditions are undeniably suitable for irrigation. As time goes on, funds become available and our policy is developed, we shall see to it that as little as possible of our water runs to waste.

There are other undertakings that must receive attention. We have already discussed the need for public buildings. We are behind in our programme in that respect and also with regard to school accommodation, as well as that necessary for officers in the Government service, such as the police. If we were not under an obligation to provide work under conditions that involve the smallest possible expenditure on the purchase of material, and which apply to undertakings that in many instances could not be justified apart from the standpoint of providing employment for as many men as possible, our programme would be entirely different. On the other hand, in one sense the expenditure of such money is taken out of the hands of the Government, and we are required to spend it on the provision of employment for the greatest possible number of men. The works we should be engaged in include country water supplies, and irrigation—our road policy is provided for—and public buildings, especially better accommodation at primary and secondary schools. If the Government itself could decide how the money could be spent and the necessary funds were available, the expenditure would be entirely different from what it is to-day when we, so to speak, have to spend it under compulsion. If it is any comfort to the member for Murray-Wellington, I can express the opinion that the money spent on irrigation works and drainage will be en-

tirely justified in the future. I note that much of the criticism has been along the lines of what should be done, and as the Estimates provide for the future, members are possibly justified in adopting that view. I have dealt with the main questions that have been raised and other items can be discussed under the Loan Estimates.

Item, Salaries and Allowances, £99,393.

Mr. SAMPSON: Will the Minister explain the reason for the increase of £10,055 in respect of salaries?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The basic wage now applies to all civil servants, and that has been responsible for the increased amount mentioned by the hon. member. Of the increased total chargeable to revenue, £900 is due to annual increments and the basic wage adjustment, and the balance is due to the amended allocation of salaries as between loan and revenue. Officers of the Works Department are paid partly from revenue and partly from loan funds. On this occasion, the greater amount has been allotted to revenue. In some cases the basic wage adjustments amount to £20 a year.

Mr. NORTH: Is any provision made so that the officers of the department may construct subways or bridges? What procedure should be adopted to have such work carried out? Subways and bridges are necessary in many parts of the metropolitan area, and must be closely associated with any road construction.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This is not a Government responsibility, except as to the main roads for which we are responsible. The responsibility rests with the Railway Department and the municipalities concerned. One subway at Maylands is to be constructed conjointly by the Commissioner of Main Roads and the local authorities concerned. Half the money was found by the Metropolitan Trust Account, and the other by the Main Roads Board. I believe that policy will be followed in other cases. The Commissioner of Main Roads does undertake some work for which he is not really responsible.

Item, Policing Traffic Act for glaring headlights and speeding on main roads, £400.

Mr. McLARTY: The sum allotted under this Item is £400. Last year £600 was voted, and £5 was spent. I hope the £400 will be expended this year.

Most motorists have a sense of responsibility, but the irresponsible driver should be brought to book. Some of them present a great danger on the roads, particularly in respect of speeding and glaring headlights. Cycles are also a danger, because riders will not carry lights unless they are forced to do so. It is the duty of the local authority to police the Act, but it cannot supervise all main roads. Another menace is the overloaded vehicle, against the owner of which action should also be taken.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The instances quoted by the hon. member will be dealt with in an amendment to the Traffic Act that will shortly be introduced.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Town Planning, £1,555—agreed to.

Vote—Agriculture, £110,100:

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gaseoyne) [9.47]: The Department of Agriculture, it can be claimed, has earned a wonderful reputation by its efforts to assist the farmer, not only in matters of guidance and instruction but also in an endeavour to solve many of his problems. Further, it can be said that the agricultural industry is second only to gold in this State, and ultimately will be the most important primary industry in Western Australia. We are experiencing a great deal of difficulty in the marketing of many of our products, and we can expect still greater difficulty in that connection. If we sum up the whole position, and the activities in countries which formerly constituted our markets, we can find food for a great deal of reflection concerning what ultimately must be very disturbing problems associated with the disposal of our primary commodities. Whilst in many countries the policy of self-sufficiency obtains, it must have a very severe effect upon the production in all countries which previously had satisfied those markets. Let us take the position in England to-day, quite apart from any other country where the race for armaments goes on. We must come to the conclusion that all Empire units, outside of foreign countries, will be very seriously affected when they try to find markets in England for their products. Let me take one item alone—pork and pork products. There is a campaign in England at present for a policy that in five

years England shall have all these requirements produced within her borders. We can thus see the beginning of a very disturbing crisis in respect of finding markets for commodities of which we have sponsored the production, and to the producers of which we have given a great deal of encouragement. In prefacing my remarks on the work of the Department of Agriculture with a reference to marketing, I consider the question of marketing is so closely allied to that of production, and the outlook is so serious that there is every reason to feel disturbed. It is necessary for us to consider how to view our policy of land settlement in relation to the marketing of commodities that the land is capable of producing. No matter what the commodity is—whether it be wheat or pork or anything else—we know that we are living on the money obtained from the export of that commodity, and we shall be very concerned in the adjustments that will have to be made because of the policy being adopted by overseas countries.

Mr. North: To obtain a balanced production will take a long time.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: For many avenues of production there is a very serious outlook. Some difficulties will arise quickly, and others will be slow in coming. One thing is certain: that with the policy of self-sufficiency adopted by the bigger nations, difficulties inevitably must come. The difficulties of production have been very materially eased for the man on the land by the activities of officers of the Department of Agriculture. In giving advice to settlers, in attending to the proper administration of laws dealing with plant diseases and pests, and in conducting necessary research the officers of the department have rendered great service to the community. The Government has always recognised the importance of the agricultural industry and given sympathetic consideration to settlers who have had to face various problems, but it is pertinent to observe that in the last five years the vote of the Department of Agriculture has almost doubled. It increased from £58,192 in 1932-33, to £110,100 this year. In that amount the figures for Muresk College and the abattoirs are not included.

With regard to the outlook for wheat this year, while the rains of the last few days have materially benefited certain areas, in some sections the outlook is hopeless. The

North-Eastern wheatbelt unfortunately expects very little crop indeed, and very fine districts, such as that around Koorda, are in a bad way. The crop in those districts will not be as much as 50 per cent. of that obtained last year. Unfortunately the worse the season the greater the ravages of pests. In consequence of the very light season there is a likelihood of a great shortage of water for stock in many parts of the State that are usually safe in this respect throughout the summer season. It is very difficult to estimate the ultimate yield of wheat. I remember that last year when I anticipated—in introducing the Estimates—that the yield would be 35,000,000 bushels, members opposite thought I was unduly optimistic, because at that stage there was a tapering off of the season. Fortunately, however, the yield approximated that estimate.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: Good rains occurred after you introduced the Estimates.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: There have been good rains recently also, though they have been patchy.

Mr. Patrick: The weather is different.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Unfortunately we cannot control that. The area sown this year was 3,323,800 acres, and if we take the State average as 11 bushels we should get within the vicinity of 39,000,000 bushels. While some districts showed promise of having better yields than those of last year, we cannot be over-optimistic in the matter. We hope, however, that the total of 39 million bushels will be reached, which will mean that the State's average will be maintained. An outstanding achievement of the department has been that 71 per cent. of the wheat grown in the State consists of varieties bred by the department and raised in the State. That is a performance with no equal in any other State in the Commonwealth. Some of our varieties have not only meant much to us but when introduced into other States have put up a very fine performance. There were 138 competitors in the Royal Agricultural Society's 50-acre crop competition last year, and the average yield was 25.7 bushels to the acre. There were nine competitors for the M. T. Padbury trophy awarded in the wheat yields crop competition. The whole of the stripped area on the competitor's holding was included in the competition and the average yield was 19

bushels 17 lbs. to the acre, a phenomenal yield. Despite the distance between some of the competitors it was remarkable how consistently high was the average yield of the total area stripped. The grain was very satisfactory last year, and the declared bushel weight was 62¼ lbs. The year before, when we had some pinching out in the northern part of the State, it was 62 lbs.

The production of export lambs in the past season has given us cause for optimism, not only with regard to the present season but also with regard to the future development in our very many rural areas. The figures of our very rapid production are certainly gratifying. Last year the record number of 269,000 carcasses was exported. Of those 238,000 were from Fremantle, and 31,000 from Albany, the increase being 125,000 over the figures of the previous year. The quality has been consistently good, even better than that of the previous year's lambs, and has been favourably commented upon in every marketing district in the United Kingdom. Wherever our lambs have been distributed, the comments have been most favourable and purchasers have increased their demands for our commodity. The prospects appear very bright. In giving consideration to coping with the extended activities the Government has decided to grant a further loan of £35,000 to the West Australian Meat Export Company for enlargement of its treatment plant at Robb's Jetty. The position is being carefully watched, and it appears that when the extensions are completed the works will be capable of treating 8,000 lambs daily and will have a storage capacity of 90,000. In continuation of our experiments in the breeding of lambs, great satisfaction has been derived from the results of those marketed from the Avondale farm. We sent away 600 lambs last year, netting 24s. 6d. each at the works. This year we have introduced into the northern area, at the Chapman farm, the nucleus of a stud which we consider will do a great deal towards at least trying out in that district what can only be contentions, until we prove them, as to the possibility of early lambs there. As members are aware, that district in the case of the merino is some weeks earlier than any other part of the State; and it is felt that when a proper cross suitable to the district has been determined, fine

results will accrue from the present work of investigation. With hon. members representing that part of the State, the Government is most anxious to prove not only that such lambs will be earlier than those in the southern part, but that so great an impetus will be given to the district that before long treatment works will be established at the northern port. Every consideration is being given to that aspect. With the addition of a special officer to undertake instruction and create enthusiasm in this class of developmental work, we are hoping for excellent results.

In the dairying districts the past season has been quite a good one. Particularly has the outlook improved for those who have gone into the dairying industry, not only because of the satisfactory season but because of the better prices for dairy products generally. The production of butter to the 30th June of this year was approximately 15,309,000 lbs., an increase of over 21 per cent. over that of last year. This increase resulted in a record export of butter, amounting to 54,721 boxes, representing an increase of 116 per cent. over the quantity exported in the previous year. That is definite progress. It is also most pleasing to know that the quality showed a general uplift. The production during this season indicates that we shall attain the record of at least 85,000 boxes for export. Cheese production last year was 818,264 lbs—slightly less than that for the previous year. That is due mainly to the fact that the satisfactory price for butter has attracted people away from the supply of whole milk for making cheese. The very important work of the testing of herds has been continued. Last year the production of over 10,000 cows was tested, and they showed an average of 223 lbs. of butter fat per cow, an increase of 26 lbs. per head over the previous year. So that by the activity of the department in endeavouring to create a quality complex in the dairy farmer, a great work for the State has been done. It is only by this work that satisfactory culling can take place in our dairy herds. We find that settlers in some districts are highly enthusiastic on this subject. Endeavours have been made to start new units in various places where there is a demand for such work. We are only hampered in regard to further extensions by the lack of additional funds.

Members know that we received some assistance from the Commonwealth Government in this matter; but it does appear that this, like most of the grants and allocations we receive from the Commonwealth Government, shrinks year by year. However, this is one grant as to which I hope that the amount furnished in the past will be the amount we shall receive for some years to come.

I have mentioned the prospects overseas in a few years' time for the pig industry, but the prospects of that industry were never brighter than they are at the moment. It seems that for a few years at least we shall enjoy highly satisfactory prices in the exporting of frozen pork and pork products to overseas countries, especially the United Kingdom. Fortunately the pig industry is one which can be built up quickly; but it is disappointing to contemplate what will happen in a few years from now, when we shall have to lose the markets which we have established for our industry to satisfy. Still, other markets may come into the picture during that time, and I would not for an instant think of doing anything to lessen the enthusiasm which has been created in the former for this particular adjunct—pigs suitable for bacon and for export—to his principal industry.

Members are aware of the activity in connection with the establishment of a dairy science course at Muresk. I feel that the department has done a great work in the establishment of that course, which has specially interested me personally. I went to a great deal of trouble in an endeavour to convince the Federal Minister for Commerce that Western Australia should receive a Federal contribution for this purpose. When the matter was discussed a few years ago and the prospect of obtaining any moneys in aid of this project seemed hopeless, at a moment's notice we proved conclusively to a conference held in Canberra that Western Australia had an agricultural college which at least could become the nucleus of a dairy science course. Without that guarantee, without the assurance that we could successfully utilise an established college for that purpose, we could not have got a penny of that money. Fortunately the Commonwealth granted £1,400, and the Australian Dairy Board £1,000, whilst a sum of £3,200 was made available from the Youth Employment Fund. We have an up-to-date

concern fully in operation, at which students are now taking the course to become qualified dairy factory operatives. It is also hoped that with the creation of this factory many of the problems attaching to the industry will be considered and will be solved. Further the factory will be used for short refresher courses for many factory operatives of the South-West. That aspect is receiving attention, as proved by the number of inquiries we receive from persons desiring to take the course.

Following on heavy crops in the three preceding seasons, our apple trees appeared to take a natural rest during last season. Though the crop was far from being a failure, it was definitely on the light side, and our export trade suffered in consequence. Whilst it is not generally admitted by the trade, I think it should be mentioned, in the best interests of the fruit trade of Western Australia, that because of the short crop and the desires of those interested in the marketing of it insufficient attention was paid to the grading of the crop and the quality and size of apples which were sent overseas. It seems to me that in an endeavour to keep up the number sent overseas we slipped a little in the size, grading and quality of some of the apples shipped.

Member: A short-sighted policy.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We cannot afford to do that. Our apples have a wonderful name overseas. We must insist upon shipping apples of good quality and so live up to the reputation we have established in past years. The total quantity of fruit exported was—

Apples	538,703 cases
Pears	27,000 cases
Grapes	73,000 cases (nearly)

Nearly 650,000 cases. With regard to the present embargo by one or two countries upon our fruit because of the Mediterranean fruit fly, while I do not desire to detain the House long on this point, I think members should know that we must live up to our obligations and satisfy the demands of the countries concerned, if we hope to retain their trade. In June last, I left the State for Ceylon in consequence of a request made to the Government by our fruitgrowers and fruit shippers. At the time we were in danger of losing markets which had been established for 30 years; no matter what arguments were submitted on paper, they

received but little consideration at the hands of those concerned. The position to-day, however, is very satisfactory. In my view, no reason at all exists why every requirement of those purchasing countries should not be agreed to, nor will compliance mean dislocation in the preparation of fruit for export and its care during transit overseas to those countries which have taken big quantities in the past.

One industry that is materially affected is the fresh grape industry, which, as I have mentioned, accounts for an export of 72,000 cases per annum. If, by our methods previous to export, we can guarantee that no fruit fly in a live condition will arrive in the grape, we shall not only continue to enjoy that trade, but will find it expanding very quickly. The authorities in Java know what they desire, and that is to keep their country free from fruit fly. I have no doubt that our growers will co-operate with the Government in its desire to ensure that our exports are maintained and that the fruit is shipped free from fruit fly. We shall not be affected to any great extent, except as to one or two very early varieties, and we shall certainly earn a name that will mean an added income for the State.

Mr. Sampson: No fruit fly of any variety is yet in Java.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is so. Even the Queensland fruit fly—not the Mediterranean fruit fly—and the very common fly are still unknown in Java. So determined are the authorities in Java to keep their country free from the fruit fly that when the new airways service from Brisbane to Java, which could land fresh fruit in Batavia within two days from Brisbane, attempted to carry on that trade, the Java authorities stopped it because of the danger of the introduction of the fruit fly. The Dutch people are extremely earnest in their endeavour to keep their country free from this dreaded pest. In our battle against disease we have had one or two scares of black spot, fungus and codlin moth, but fortunately we were able to control the outbreaks. How they occur is remarkable. However, we can still say that the State is free from the dreaded scourge of codlin moth, and we hope to keep it so. The collection of the orchard tax is a disturbing matter to many people, not only because of the smallness of the amount, but

because of the inconvenience caused to people who have to pay it. Good work has been done with the money so collected. When we realise that our fruit industry is worth such a large sum to us from our sales overseas and our internal consumption, no one will begrudge the efforts to keep the State as free as possible from pests. The inspectors are doing their work, we find the people are becoming more interested and few cases are reported of people being obstinate and refusing to obey instructions or requests for the destruction of fruit infested with fly or for the baiting of trees, as was the case in the past. A general improvement is noticeable in the outlook of persons concerned in this matter. At the moment, we have six inspectors and if the collections improve, as we hope they will, that number will be added to in the near future.

With regard to the veterinary branch, fortunately the health of the stock in the State remains good. There has been no serious outbreak of any infectious disease, and stock owners are keen to take advantage of new discoveries, which save them from worry, if vaccine or inoculation can be applied. Members who have been in the House only as long as I have, will remember that three or four years ago, we heard on the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture very little except complaints about toxic paralysis and grasshoppers. Toxic paralysis gave rise to considerable discussion. Due to the encouragement given to stock owners and the very earnest activities of the officers of the department, with the co-operation of those whose cattle were affected, we now hear very little about that disease. It is very hard to ascribe all the results to our veterinarian, but much good work has been done by him in eradicating toxic paralysis and similar diseases.

The tobacco industry calls for special mention. Last year our production was 850,000 lbs. We were third on the list of producers in the Commonwealth. That yield was obtained from 1,200 acres, the average yield being 700 lbs. per acre. I have been hoping for a great extension of this valuable work this year; and at conferences both in and out of the State I have stressed the need for further research into tobacco problems. Tobacco is not easily grown by those who do not understand its production, and the department felt that every encour-

agement should be given to the anticipation of problems and the carrying out of research work in problems already existing. Very good work has been done. One has only to instance what was done to control blue mould to realise what that discovery has saved this State in the growing of the tobacco crops. I was very concerned at Mr. Casey's announcement last Saturday that we were to receive an amount 33 per cent. less than the amount the Commonwealth gave us last year. It is shocking to think, when we know that ultimately we shall be the greatest tobacco-growing State in the Commonwealth, that a State like New South Wales, which produced one per cent. less than we did last year, will receive £3,750, while our allocation for research is reduced to £935.

Mr. Patrick: The amounts should have been based on production.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If it is to depend on the need for research, then we should get more than New South Wales. If it is to depend upon production, then we should receive at least the same as that State has received. If it were to be based on anticipated production, then we should certainly receive a lot more than New South Wales. I was assured by one Minister for Agriculture that his State would be prepared to forego some of its allocation in order that Western Australia might receive a fair deal in this respect. That is no idle statement. Other Ministers for Agriculture are sympathetically inclined towards the development of the industry in Western Australia. They consider that we produce a leaf equal in quality to that to be found in any other part of Australia, and the Minister for Agriculture in Queensland said that with our method of green-manuring, and our ability to use it, Western Australia was destined to produce a quantity and quality of leaf at least equal to that of Queensland's within a very short period. In these circumstances, it is very disappointing indeed, to say the least of it, that the Commonwealth permits Ministers of Agriculture to meet to decide upon the proportionate allocations to be made and then, within a week or two, disregard entirely the recommendations received from those Ministers.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: Has a protest been forwarded to the Commonwealth authorities?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I think the hon. member will give the Government credit for doing that, and doing it in a manner that left no room for misunderstanding as to its meaning. We have tried out a method of curing tobacco leaf with ethylene gas, and that process promises not only to shorten the period of curing but to provide a much better keeping quality of leaf. In an endeavour to assist the growers in handling their commodity, the Government has erected a large grading and bulking shed in the tobacco-producing district. Members can understand that, in view of the prospects of the industry, the tremendous impetus it has received in recent years, due to the enthusiasm of the department and of those engaged in it, particularly in the Manjimup district, it has been a matter of grave concern that when the Commonwealth had an opportunity to assist the industry that assistance was denied to us.

The Committee will be interested to know that another agricultural industry with great potentialities is that of the production of subterranean clover seed. To those who do not realise just how extensive this trade is, it will be surprising that last year 500 tons of clover seed were cleaned and sold. In order to assist in the certification and sale of the seed, we arranged for inspection and certification as being true to strain, and also as regards fertility. With that certification, we found there was a great increase in the demand for the seed. Much of it was exported to the Eastern States, and some to New Zealand. The value of the seed is about £100 a ton, so that the industry is one to which we should give every encouragement, particularly as our seasons lend themselves to the production of seed of a very good quality.

Mr. Withers: What are the prospects regarding markets for the export of seed?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: From inquiries that have been made, it would appear that there is still a large field to be exploited, if we take our own State as an example. Considering what has been done regarding the introduction of clovers in New Zealand, it is obvious that the country lends itself to clover production, and requires large quantities of quality seed that we can produce.

Mr. Doney: A number of growers here are exporting seed to the Eastern States.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is so. Unfortunately, in certain parts of the pastoral areas, as indicated by the Minister for Lands the other night, drought conditions still continue. When I introduced the Agricultural Department Estimates a year ago, I mentioned that in my electorate a million sheep had been lost. It is sad to know that in very few instances have conditions improved since then. In some parts the conditions have become notably worse. Where there was a little improvement from the standpoint of rain, encouragement was given to re-stocking, and sheep were purchased from South Australia. They were kept alive by hand feeding, but unfortunately not only have those sheep not yet produced, but many have since died. We have one instance of a station where 25,000 sheep were shorn four or five years ago, and yet 2,500 cannot be mustered to-day. There are many such instances. That represents an appalling national loss. Unfortunately, it seems that not until the middle of next summer can any relief be expected. In country such as at Wooramei, where 30,000 sheep were formerly carried well, and throughout much of the coastal country between Hamelin Pool and Carnarvon, the whole area is wind-swept, and throughout thousands of acres all the natural scrub is dead. Unfortunately, there seems to be no possibility of relief for many months to come. One of the distressing features in the country so affected, which includes not only the Gascoyne but the Mt. Magnet and Murchison areas, is that there has not been a lambing for many years.

Mr. Marshall: Not for five years.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The youngest sheep in some districts are six years old, and no lambs have been produced from those flocks. The difficulties that the pastoralists have to face are enormous. The owners of some properties had no bank overdrafts, and their method of finance was simple, as it was a matter of working on the wool liens from year to year. Now they have not only lost their flocks that took over 30 years to breed up, but they have bank overdrafts running into many thousands of pounds. Members will appreciate that the outlook is indeed serious for those in the pastoral areas in the North. The increase in the number of sheep in the agricultural areas

has, to a considerable extent, offset the loss of production occasioned in the northern areas.

It is hardly necessary for me to touch on many of the activities of this most important department, but one or two phases could be mentioned in passing, such as the preparation and despatch to farmers of bacterial cultures to assist in the establishment of leguminous crops. Some members of this House have benefited as the result of that branch of the work of the Agricultural Department. Over 2,000 bacterial cultures were sent out this year to enable the seed of legumes to be inoculated. As members are aware, the establishment of legumes in the first year, where new land is being developed, depends very largely upon seed inoculation. Perhaps I should say a word or two regarding grasshoppers. Two years ago, the adjournment of the House was moved on the score that the Government had not done all it should in regard to that problem. Fortunately there has not been much agitation along those lines more recently, and it has not been suggested that the Government has not done its duty in that respect during the last year or two. As is known we successfully defended our honour at that time. It must be admitted that during the past few years, since the pest has been so bad, we have successfully grappled with the problem of controlling it. Remarkable it is that the incidence of the pest has been greatest in districts where it did not appear last year, or did so only to a minor extent. In the Mullewa-Geraldton-Ajana districts, down to Mingenew, there have been very serious outbreaks on this occasion. Last year we spent £22,000 in controlling the pest by baiting and poisoning, and breaking up fallowed land in which there were egg beds. This year we shall not be able to spend as much as that, because we are not spending quite so much money in the ploughing of abandoned areas. Fortunately quite a few of these areas have been successfully leased and were successfully cropped during the current year. We are taking the same precautions this year as last year and are seeking the wholehearted co-operation of the road boards, farmers, and citizens generally in coping with the pest. The Government has done more than could have been expected of it in this connection. In the other States nothing has

been done approaching what we have done on a per capita basis, and no Government has ever taken the responsibility we have in an endeavour to shoulder the expense of the campaign against the grasshopper.

Mr. Doney: Has the pest been as bad here as it has in the other States?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It is contended that it has been worse in New South Wales. We were guided by the impoverishment of the farmers in whose districts the outbreak occurred. Had we adopted legislation similar to that passed in South Australia, which meant imposing a rate on all these properties, the collection of the rate making possible the distribution of poison and bait, not much poison baiting would have been done in this State.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: Many holdings would have been abandoned.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Government did the right thing in not introducing such legislation at that stage, for it would have meant additional hardship upon the settlers, particularly in the areas which have suffered so much in recent years.

I should like to refer to the banana industry at Carnarvon. Despite drought conditions, it is remarkable that the industry should have developed so well. In no other part of the world are bananas grown solely under irrigation as is done at Carnarvon. It is very encouraging to note the expansion of the industry, especially as no rain at all has fallen in the district in recent times. In their natural habitat bananas require a 90-inch rainfall, while in this State we are growing the fruit in a rainfall which over the last 40 years has averaged 9 inches. Had it not been for the persistence and hard work of those engaged in the industry, despite the dreadful weather conditions and difficulties they had to overcome in securing their water supplies, we would never have had the production last year of 16,000 cases of the fruit. This year the anticipation is, despite the dry season, that the production will be increased to a considerable extent.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: The quality has also improved.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, because of the greater knowledge that has been acquired of the unusual conditions. When these facts are mentioned in countries that are adapted to the growing of bananas in a natural way, and when people are told that we are growing the fruit where there is

no rainfall, it is difficult to make them believe the facts. People who are growing crops under unnatural conditions are faced with the difficulty of knowing at what stage in maturity the fruit will carry best, and at what stage prior to maturity the crops should receive full irrigation. We are conducting experiments in this respect, and hope to draw successful conclusions from them.

Many problems are being investigated by the department, including the very important problem of soil erosion. Several committees are operating in conjunction with the officers of the Minister for Lands and those of the Minister for Works. They are dealing also with problems affecting irrigation and crops grown under irrigation. I am sure members will agree with me that, generally speaking, the department is doing excellent work for the State.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.36 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 28th September, 1938.

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

QUESTION—WATER SUPPLIES.

Goldfields Branch, Report.

Hon. H. SEDDON asked the Chief Secretary: Will the Minister lay on the Table of the House the report of the Gold-