

to make any statement in that respect. Such a proposal may have its advantages as well as its drawbacks.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

## BILL—PRISONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Order of the Day read, for resumption of debate, from the 17th October, on motion for second reading.

On motion by Hon. W. Kingsmill, debate further adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.40 p.m.

## Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 22nd October, 1918.

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

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

### LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. HARDWICK, leave of absence for two weeks granted to the member for Kimberley (Mr. Durack) on the ground of urgent private business.

### MOTION—STANDING ORDER 386a, TO AMEND.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore) [4.42]: I move—

That Standing Order 386a be amended by striking out in paragraph (b), line 2, the word "one" and substituting in lieu "a Minister's."

The Committee of this House appointed in March last to go into the question of the interpretation of this Standing Order have submitted a report in which they recommend this amendment. Some difficulty has arisen as to the interpretation of this Standing Order when the House has been in Committee of Supply. The Standing Order at present reads—

386a. Notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 372, no member (except the Minister, who shall have the right of reply) shall speak more than once during—(a) A general discussion on the whole of the Estimates held on the first vote. (b) A general discussion on the administration of one department held on the first vote of that department. In both cases the reply

of the Minister shall close the debate. In all other cases the rules of debate in Committee of the whole shall be maintained.

The amendment really proposes to substitute "a Minister's department" for the words now appearing in paragraph (b), "one department." I do not think the House will object to agree to the amendment.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. T. Robinson—Canning) [4.44]: May I add a word of explanation before the motion goes to the vote. The words "one department" in paragraph (b) were held, during the discussion of last year's Estimates, to mean a Government department; and some Ministers control seven or eight Government departments. The further result was that it was held that "one department" might mean seven or eight discussions in connection with one Minister's work. The object of the amendment is to limit the discussion to a Minister's department, instead of extending it to the various divisions comprised in a Minister's department.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Take the Minister for Lands and Agriculture; there are two Ministers.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: There is only one Minister for Lands and Agriculture, and that is the Premier.

Mr. Pilkington: Take the Colonial Secretary and Minister for Education.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The Colonial Secretary's office and the Education Department are treated quite separately, as two departments, in the Estimates.

Mr. Pilkington: And there are two separate discussions.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes. Let hon. members look at a non-controversial department; say, the Colonial Treasurer's department. On turning to page 63 of the Estimates they will find that the Colonial Treasurer controls ten of what might be called Government departments, but what constitute really, in these Estimates, one department. That is to say, the department of the Colonial Treasurer comprises those ten divisions. In the way the Standing Order reads, a general discussion may take place on each of those departments, and so the discussion on the Estimates would be interminable. The object of the amendment is to confine discussion to a Minister's department. It is not intended to burke discussion at all, for hon. members will be able to run their eyes down a department and see what items they are interested in, with a view to discussing those particular items on the first vote. In respect of the illustration given by the member for Perth, hon. members will see that in the Colonial Secretary's Department there are 11 subdivisions, each of which might be called a department. Under the amendment they will be treated as one, as the Colonial Secretary's Department.

Hon. P. Collier: Why should they? They have often been treated separately before.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: We have not had ten different discussions on one department.

Hon. P. Collier: Yes, very often.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: What is meant is that under "Office of Colonial Secretary" hon. members must discuss those various items in the Estimates of the Colonial Secretary, but when we come to the Education Department it is a separate department, the department of the Minister for Education.

Mr. Pilkington: The same Minister under another name.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: True, but it will be a Minister's department.

Mr. Pilkington: Had you not better call it a Ministerial Department.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Personally, I have no objection to the word "Ministerial." Indeed, it might be better than "a Minister's." The object of the Standing Orders Committee was to divide the Estimates into departments as we find them to-day under the control of various Ministers, rather than into the little sub-departments that the service happens to be divided into.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [4.48]: I do not see how the proposed amendment is going to elucidate the matter in any way.

The Attorney General: It will shorten discussion.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I cannot see that it will. After all, the interpretation hinged round the question of what is a department, not around the word "one" or the words "a Minister's." Take the Colonial Secretary's Estimates: We have there the heading, "Summary of Departments, expenditure, estimates, etc." Apparently under the summary it is held that the various sub-departments administered by the Colonial Secretary, such as Aborigines, Fisheries, Gaols, Lunacy and so on, are departments. Will the question not hinge around the interpretation of departments, of what is a department?

The Attorney General: That is how it was; now if we substitute "a Minister's" the question will not arise.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The one Minister may have a dozen departments. It will depend on the interpretation the House puts on "a department." It may be held that the Colonial Secretary has a number of departments, that the Aborigines is a department, that the Gaols is a department; but if those separate divisions be held to be departments, the amendment will not shorten the range of discussion. In any case, what is the object in endeavouring to shorten the discussion?

The Attorney General: Merely to confine it within bounds.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is altering a practice of long standing.

The Attorney General: No, we have been actually following that practice.

Hon. P. COLLIER: For how long? I remember on many occasions separate discussions have ranged around those various departments such as Gaols, Lunacy, Police, etc.

The Attorney General: They can all be discussed on the particular items.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But that does not give one sufficiently wide scope to discuss the whole administration of the department.

The Attorney General: When you get up to discuss generally the Colonial Secretary's Department, you can discuss any of these.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, just as the Minister, when introducing the Estimates, covers the various divisions, so may another speaker take in rotation, one after another, all those departments. That is not going to shorten discussion. It is merely making it a question of whether one shall deal with all those sub-divisions in one speech or in a number of speeches.

The Attorney General: It was a new departure made by your Government, and we are now putting it into law.

Hon. P. COLLIER: How have we got on in past years?

The Attorney General: There have been disputes as to what was right.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not remember any such disputes. I would like to know which committee framed the amendment.

Mr. SPEAKER: For the information of the hon. member, let me explain. When last year's Estimates were under discussion a ruling was given by the Chairman of Committees. That ruling was referred to me, and I did not uphold it. At a later date the Chairman of Committees moved a motion that this Standing Order be submitted to the Standing Orders Committee for revision, for the reason that it was open to more than one interpretation. That motion was carried, and in pursuance of that order of the House the Standing Orders Committee, two or three weeks ago, met and discussed Standing Order 386a and decided to recommend to the House the amendment moved by the Premier. With that amendment embodied, paragraph (b) of the Standing Order will read as follows:—

A general discussion on the administration of a Minister's department, held on the first vote of that department.

That is to say, on the first vote of one department controlled by a Minister. If the amendment be carried, the reply of the Minister will close the general discussion, after which hon. members will be free to deal with the items. The amendment will serve to make the Standing Order clearer. I held in my ruling that it was not necessary for any further classification, but the House carried the motion referring this Standing Order to the Standing Orders Committee for the purpose of removing any ambiguity.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Now I recollect the circumstances. After all, this amendment is aiming at the curtailment of the privileges of members in a general discussion on the Estimates, privileges which have obtained in the past. I remember now that the Chairman of Committees ruled that a general discussion on the sub-divisions could not take place.

The Attorney General: That it could take place.

Hon. P. COLLIER: His Honour ruled otherwise. The House disagreed.

Mr. SPEAKER: It was the Committee which took exception to the ruling of the Chairman of Committees, and that ruling was referred to me. I did not uphold the Chairman's ruling.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The House disagreed.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House held that my ruling was correct, and at a later date the Chairman of Committees moved that paragraph (b) of Standing Order 386a be referred to the Standing Orders Committee in order that it might be made clearer. The Standing Orders Committee has made the recommendation, which in my opinion will render the Standing Order quite clear without any further curtailment of discussion than the House desired last session. The House only desired that the general discussion should be confined to the first vote of the department. That was the decision of the House, both at the time when the ruling of the Chairman of Committees was dissented from, and also when the House carried the motion to refer Standing Order 386a to the Standing Orders Committee.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I confess that my memory is not too clear on the incidents of that evening. I have not looked up this question, so I will not pursue it, but I do not see how this amendment is going to achieve anything. What is the distinction between one department and a Minister's department? I am sorry that the Standing Order has not been printed in the current number of "Votes and Proceedings." It was printed last week, when there was no occasion for it, but it is now omitted.

Mr. SPEAKER: With the amendment embodied, paragraph (b) of the Standing Order will read as follows:—

A general discussion on the administration of a Minister's department, held on the first vote of that department.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [4.58]: I agree that sometimes a Minister, when introducing his Estimates, deals with the whole of the departments under his charge. But we had an example only the last evening on which we were considering the Estimates, when the Honorary Minister, in dealing with the Estimates of the Minister for Lands and Agriculture, dealt only with the Estimates of the Lands Department. The position is that the Minister who controls agriculture has his seat in another place. So we have had only the Estimates of the Lands Department before us, and have had nothing about the Agricultural Department.

The Premier: You will get that later on.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We cannot if the amendment be carried, because the departments of the Minister for Lands and of the Minister for Agriculture, are in together. We have had the Estimates of the Lands Department, and so if the amendment be passed we shall not get anything at all about the Agricultural Department.

The Attorney General: But the Minister has not yet finished his remarks, I think.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes, he has. I think the member for Perth is quite right when he says that the Estimates of the Colonial Secretary and the Minister for Education will come as one. Also the Attorney General, the Minister for Woods and Forests, and the Minister for Industries will come in

as one Minister. On some of these departments we will, therefore, have no opportunity of discussion at all. Each subdivision is separated in the Estimates. While we may understand it now, immediately the Standing Order is raised it will not be in order to discuss them. I think it would be advisable to leave the Standing Order as it stands.

Hon. T. WALKER (Kanowna) [5.0]: I do not know that I quite understand the Attorney General. If I understand it, that on the introduction of the Estimates only one general discussion can take place, that is when the Minister generally introduces his Estimates, and that all the departments under the control of that Minister are to be treated as if they were items—

The Minister for Mines: Subdivisions.

Hon. T. WALKER: And gone on with as items, I shall have to disagree with the amendment. But I do not take that to be the meaning of the amendment. The amendment is to paragraph (b) and is to substitute the word "a Minister's" for the word "one," so that it would read, "A general discussion on the administration of a Minister's department held on the first vote of that department." There are two things provided for in the Standing Orders, one is the general discussion on the whole Estimates—

Mr. SPEAKER: That is provided for earlier in the Standing Order.

Hon. T. WALKER: We have that general discussion, which has been the invariable practice of the House. The whole dispute arises under the interpretation of the word "department." If we are to take the meaning given here by the Attorney General, a Minister's department will embrace all the departments which are distinctively separate departments, and they will be treated as if they were distinctive and separate departments, but the Minister's Estimates alone would be a subject for general discussion and we would have to treat Police, Gaols, and Charities Departments, and all the other divisions which are actual departments, as if they were not departments but were subsidiary to the general Estimates. If we wanted to debate the general administration of the Charities Department, we should have to do it on the general introduction of the debate in the first instance, or not at all. I understand that wherever a department presided over by a Minister comes under discussion, the Estimates can be introduced by a general debate, and if it be a convenience to members, and a saving of time, that should be so. We cannot go over the whole ground and give adequate consideration to important branches over which a Minister presides, in a general discussion. It is proper that we should generally discuss gaols or lunacy when these questions are under consideration. If we do not so interpret it we shall not save time, but I am afraid we shall create a loss of time by trying to get into this general discussion second reading speeches on the items as we reach them. My interpretation of the meaning is that whenever we come to a department, if it be a department, however sub-

sidiary, we should consider it as a department and as a Ministerial department, and its introduction would be followed by a general discussion. If it is read in that way it is perfectly clear. Take the Colonial Secretary's department. The portfolio of that Minister covers police, but the Police Department is a separate and Ministerial department in itself. Does the Attorney General say that we cannot introduce that by a general discussion?

The Attorney General: No one wants to stop any of the general discussion.

Hon. T. WALKER: I want to understand whether we are giving authority to the Chairman of Committees to stop it by the interpretation. Would a general discussion on the Police Department, though it comes under the head of the Colonial Secretary's departments—there having been a general discussion on the Estimates of the Colonial Secretary—be stopped by the Chairman of Committees?

The Attorney General: Yes, because you have already had a general discussion.

Hon. T. WALKER: No.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): One on the general discussion and one on the Colonial Secretary's department.

Hon. T. WALKER: We would not have had a general discussion on the department.

The Attorney General: This is nothing new.

Hon. T. WALKER: This is new now.

The Attorney General: This is a rule which has been carried out for some years.

Mr. SPEAKER: It has been carried out for some five or six years.

Hon. T. WALKER: Whenever we come to a department I think we should, in accordance with the time-honoured usages of Parliament, permit a general discussion in order to save time.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If necessary, you mean.

Hon. T. WALKER: Of course. If that is not done members will want to speak again and again on every item. To avoid that, when we come to Police, we should allow a general discussion on the Police administration, and from that time onwards the debate is strictly confined to the item under consideration. It is impossible to deal adequately with important departments of the State by merely considering an item. When we come to the Colonial Secretary's department we cannot adequately discuss such a department as Lunacy on the general debate.

The Attorney General: Why not?

Hon. T. WALKER: The endurance limit will not permit of it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The medical section is in six subdivisions.

Hon. T. WALKER: There would be Medical, Charities, Gaols, Aborigines, Police, and still more departments, each one being of vast importance to the State. Every member can get up and talk about each branch of the whole vote, and we could race over everything without touching anything in particular.

Hon. J. Mitchell: And mystify the Minister.

Hon. T. WALKER: Yes. It should be possible to discuss each particular department at the time so as to avoid this confusion. I take it we shall be able, when we reach any one department of a Minister, to debate that generally. To that meaning I shall give my support and shall vote for the amendment. If there be a doubt expressed by the Attorney General, then we must be prepared for wrangling and disputes, and disorder, and for inadequate discussions and loss of time when we reach the Estimates.

Question put, and a division called for and tellers appointed.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member for Claremont is not in order in crossing the floor of the House after the appointment of the tellers. The hon. member must therefore vote with the Ayes.

Division resulted as follows:—

Ayes . . . . .	19
Noes . . . . .	10

Majority for . . .	9
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#### AYES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Maley
Mr. Broun	Mr. Money
Mr. Davies	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Draper	Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. Duff	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Veryard
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Brown
Mr. Lefroy	(Teller.)

#### NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Roche
Mr. Collier	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Mitchell	Mr. Walker
Mr. Nairn	Mr. Chesson
Mr. Pickering	(Teller.)
Mr. Pilkington	

Question thus passed.

### BILL—GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

#### Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND RAILWAYS (Hon. C. A. Hudson—Yilgarn) [5.55] in moving the second reading said: The Bill which has been delivered to hon. members contains a number of clauses, but it is in reality a Bill containing only one principle, and that is whether or not there shall be three Commissioners to manage, maintain, and control the railways of this State, or only one Commissioner as at present. It may appear at first sight that the Bill contains other provisions, but I would explain for the information of the House that Part 2 of the Government Railways Act, 1904, has been lifted out and amended, and it is intended by the provisions of the Bill to re-

place it in its altered form, making provision for the appointment of three Commissioners. That is the only alteration that is made to the original Act of 1904 with the exception of two machinery clauses.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The salary is not fixed.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND RAILWAYS:** No.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is, in the present Act.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND RAILWAYS:** It is not; I will explain to the hon. member later that he is mistaken in that view. I do not propose to go into the history of the railway management of Western Australia beyond saying that for a number of years it was subject to Ministerial control, and that principle was carried on until 1902 or 1903 when a Commissioner was appointed who had not a seat in the Cabinet. The principle of the management of the railways by a Commissioner was established in 1903 by an Act passed by the Legislature in that year. No attempt has been made to alter the system, although a general discussion took place in 1913, when the present Commissioner was re-appointed and certain suggestions were made and arguments were adduced as to why we should revert to the old system of Ministerial control entirely. Those suggestions and arguments did not meet with any support or encouragement, and we may take it now that since 1903 or 1904 the principle has been firmly established that the Government railways should be managed by a Commissioner or under the system of a Commission. The first Commissioner appointed was the gentleman who now holds the portfolio of Minister for Works, and he held it from 1902 to 1907, when the present Commissioner, Mr. Short, was appointed at a salary of £1,500 a year. In 1913 that gentleman's duties were increased and the Government then in power re-appointed him for a further period of five years and increased his salary to £2,000 per annum. Mr. Short's term of appointment expired on the 30th June last and prior to that date the Government decided not to re-appoint him. They did so partly for the reason that that gentleman had attained the age of very nearly 60 years and it was not thought desirable to re-appoint him for a long period.

Hon. P. Collier: There are plenty of officials in the service much older than that.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND RAILWAYS:** Possibly, but I am giving that as one of the reasons why the present Commissioner was not re-appointed for a further term of five years. Another reason and a more important one, was that the Government thought that the administration of the railways might be better undertaken by a board consisting of three Commissioners. Mr. Short has had a long and honourable career in the railways of Western Australia, having originally been connected with the Great Southern Railway when it was in the hands of a private company. He was Chief Traffic Manager of the Government railways

for some years and afterwards received the appointment of Commissioner. I think Mr. Short is entitled to credit for the energy he has applied to his administration, for the ability he has shown and for the capacity he has displayed in the exercise of his functions. Indeed, I think he is deserving of just and generous treatment at the hands of the Government of the State. I would like to draw attention in passing to certain observations made the other night by the leader of the Opposition which have given rise to some misunderstanding. The hon. member was twitting the Premier for not having introduced this measure earlier and he used an expression which might be interpreted to mean that the present holder of the office, Mr. Short was not performing his functions in such a way as to maintain a standard of efficiency.

Hon. P. Collier: I did not infer any such thing.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND RAILWAYS:** I am merely drawing attention to what might have been inferred from the remarks.

Hon. P. Collier: I do not think my language will bear any such construction.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND RAILWAYS:** I thought it advisable to refer to the matter for the purpose of giving the hon. member an opportunity of saying that he had no intention—and I believe he had no intention—of conveying any such idea.

Hon. P. Collier: There is no need for the opportunity to be given because my language will not bear any such construction.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND RAILWAYS:** However, the atmosphere has not been cleared by my having mentioned the subject. I can assure the House that it is not the intention of the Commissioner to in any way relax the performance of his duties during this period.

Hon. P. Collier: I did not say it was. What I said was the principle was a bad one, and it was that I was dealing with.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND RAILWAYS:** I am dealing with the matter as it was published, and as a misapprehension arose I have drawn attention to it for the purpose of clearing the atmosphere. We can do away with all references to personal conditions with regard to the appointment of three Commissioners. It is not a personal matter; it is on of hard fact. The railways to-day are in such a position as to justify us in deciding whether or not it is better that the management should continue under one Commissioner or whether three should be appointed. The importance of the railways with regard to our finance and the development of the State need no elaboration. A mere glance at the general summary of the revenue as shown in the Estimates illustrates the fact that of the total State revenue of £4,023,297, no less a sum than £1,828,853 is contributed from the earnings of the railways. That in itself I take it is evidence enough that the railways are of sufficient importance to demand our close scrutiny at this juncture. I would like to direct the attention of hon. members to the report of the Commissioner which was published last year, and in which the Commis-

sioner stated the reasons for the present financial position of the railways. I will refer only to two paragraphs because I think they contain the essence of his report. He says—

As forecasted in my last report, this deficit shows a large increase on those of the preceding two years. After making due allowance for the prejudicial effect which the war has had on our operations, the present result is unquestionably due to the extension of the railways without a corresponding increase in population and production, which has rendered impossible the utilisation of the railways to the extent necessary to ensure profitable results. Therefore, the position which has now arisen has been inevitable. This has been foreseen and referred to in my earlier reports.

And, too, the paragraph on page 3, wherein he states—

I have no desire to appear pessimistic in respect to our railways; in fact, up to a few years ago I regarded them as one of the best assets in the Commonwealth, and in my opinion they will be so again when an increase in population and production commensurate with the capabilities of our extensive system takes place. It must be recognised, however, that until this end is attained a loss will result in working, and it is for this reason that I have dealt with the subject at length, and endeavoured to clearly show our position and future prospects.

The losses that have been made in the railways up to the end of June, 1917, are also shown in the same report on page 4, from the years 1906-7 to 1916-17. We have had eight years in which a profit has been shown, the profit being from 1906-7 at £42,000 to 1910-11, £224,000; 1913-14, £128,000 to £160,000. In 1914-15 there was a loss on the railways which was shown to be £25,651. In 1915-16 the loss was £48,795; in 1916-17, £214,834, and last year our loss was shown on the working of the Government railways to be £289,000, so that there was an increase in last year's operations of £75,000. That has caused some anxiety to the Government, and close scrutiny has been given to the figures supplied by the Commissioner, and it is thought that a better system might obtain of closer personal supervision of the details of administration; that there should be closer inspection of the lines themselves by a person such as the Commissioner, having authority and responsibility, and for those reasons this Bill has been brought into this Chamber, to have it determined by the House whether or not members will agree to the proposal of the Government. That the matter of the railway finance is somewhat serious is further illustrated by a comparison of the figures for 1904, when the present Act was passed appointing one Commissioner, and the present state of the finances. The capital in 1904 invested in the Government railways was £8,900,000 odd; this year the total amount that has been expended in capital is £17,760,000, whilst the earnings in 1904 were £1,588,000, and this year they are only £1,860,000. The working expenses in 1904 were £1,179,000, and this year up to the 30th June they were £1,451,000. I have had pre-

pared for the convenience of members a return of all the years between 1904 and 1918, showing the growth of the expenditure on capital and the payment of interest and other figures, which I have just recited, and I will arrange to have them placed on the Table of the House for members' convenience. The miles of lines open for traffic on the 30th June, 1904, were 1,541, whilst in 1918 they are 3,491. The number of employees in 1904 was 6,747, and this year the number is 6,648. I think a close examination of the figures will disclose the fact that there is the greatest necessity for some reorganisation or for some reconstruction in that department. I would like to point out that in 1903 there was a proposal made in this State, when the amount involved in capital expenditure was only eight million pounds, for the appointment of three commissioners. The James Government brought in a Bill in 1903 for the appointment of three commissioners. At that time Mr. George held the office of Commissioner of Railways, and it was thought by the Assembly in those days, he only having held office for three months, that he should be given a trial.

Hon. P. Collier: It was clearly understood that there were no two commissioners born who would work with him.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND RAILWAYS: That was not so expressed. The hon. member not having been in Parliament at that time cannot speak with authority. I had the honour of coming into Parliament at the same time as the leader of the Opposition, and I was not in the House at the time of the appointment of Mr. George. But I am drawing the attention of members to the fact that it was thought—although the proposition was rejected—nevertheless it was thought by the Government of the day in 1903, that three commissioners were desirable. The growth of our railway system, however, has, I think, justified us in coming to the conclusion that we should have three commissioners appointed. It must be borne in mind that our system of railways in this State is very extensive. The mileage, as I pointed out, was in 1904, 1,500 miles; now it is 3,500, roughly speaking. Most of the lines are out in the back country, which one commissioner has very little opportunity of visiting at frequent intervals. The line from Albany to Meekatharra is about 1,000 miles and from Laverton to Meekatharra 1,200 miles, and I take it members will realise that one commissioner cannot be away from his office for such lengthy periods to make close examination of the lines that are necessary. Then we have the tramways, which were not in operation in 1904, or were not under the control of the Government. There is invested in the tramways a capital of £592,000. There are 36 miles of tramways, the revenue is £155,000 and the expenditure £110,000. Here again, we have a department which requires close attention in its administration. We shall deal more exhaustively with the subject when dealing with the Estimates, but at present I desire to draw attention to the fact that in charge of the Commissioner of Railways we have a railway system with a capital expen-

diture of 17 million pounds, and the tramways, with more than half a million pounds, and the Electric Supply Department with £370,000. So that these vast businesses, I contend, are really too much to place upon the shoulders of one man—to put it in the vernacular it is not a one-man job. I do not think it is fair either that we should ask one man to carry on a business of so diversified a character. I do not think he can personally give that close attention that is necessary, and I do not think we can expect from him those good results that he himself would wish, and that the State demands. I am not disposed usually to follow the practice of the Eastern States in a slavish manner, but I think we should go to them sometimes to gather the experience that they have had, and such information might help us to form our judgment, especially in matters of so much concern to the Government of the country as the appointment of commissioners. The Commonwealth railways, which have recently been opened, have one commissioner. He was paid £1,800 per annum while engineer-in-chief, and now he is paid £2,000 a year. In New South Wales they have three commissioners, the chief being paid £3,000 a year, and two assistant commissioners at £1,500 a year each. In New South Wales there are 4,188 miles of railways in operation. In Queensland there is a chief commissioner who receives £2,250 per annum, a deputy commissioner for Rockampton, that is a district commissioner, at £950, and a deputy commissioner for Townsville who is in receipt of £1,500 per annum. In Queensland they have 4,966 miles of Government lines in operation. These figures are completed up to the end of last year, and are subject to correction if there has been any development since. The South Australian railways are run by an acting commissioner, who is in receipt of £1,250 per annum. Tasmania, by a general manager receiving £1,200 per annum. They have 562 miles of railway. In Victoria there are three commissioners, one in receipt of £2,500 per annum and two others in receipt of £1,755 per annum. It is well to consider the position in Victoria, where in 1896 they had their railways—I should say in 1896 they appointed three commissioners, and for a considerable period they were managed under that system. It was thought it would be a better arrangement to have one commissioner and to make him solely responsible, and so one commissioner was appointed. But in 1903 a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire extensively and exhaustively into the management and control of the Victorian railway system, and on their recommendation three commissioners were appointed to manage the railways of Victoria, and they have continued in that practice ever since. I take it that we may deduce from that that they have found the working of the railways by a commission of three more beneficial and leading to greater efficiency and economy. There is the case where one commissioner only was employed, and I think that we might follow the example of Victoria and pass the second reading of this Bill, and establish the principle that in this State we

should have three commissioners. A good deal of speculation has taken place as to the personnel of the proposed commission, but I can say that it is the intention of the Government to call for applications, and although we have had applications and have heard of applicants no one is fixed in the mind of the Government. It will depend on the qualifications of the applicants for the position, as to who obtains the position. In a general sense the chairman will be expected to have had railway experience combined with commercial and financial training. It will of course depend upon the bent which he has been following in his previous experience, as to which branch of the railway service the other two Commissioners are likely to be drawn from. It will be necessary to have one man thoroughly experienced in traffic, and the third possibly with engineering experience. The Government would be stultifying themselves if they were to state any fixed lines upon which they proposed to act in regard to the appointment of Commissioners, because the determination to be arrived at in this respect will depend upon the number and the qualifications of the applicants.

Mr. Pickering: What about remuneration?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND RAILWAYS: The question of remuneration I will touch upon. It is proposed to pay the Chief Commissioner £2,000, and each of the other Commissioners £1,500, per annum.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That means an increase in the cost of administration.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND RAILWAYS: It means an increase of £3,000 per annum in the cost of administration; but this is a very small percentage of the earnings of the railways, and might well and easily be saved by closer supervision and greater attention to the details of earnings and expenditure. I do not consider that the Government should bind themselves even to those amounts since it may be necessary to pay a little more in order to secure the services of possibly better men than those who would be applicable at the rates of pay I have mentioned. In my opening remarks I stated that this Bill contains two provisions relating to administration which are not in the original Act of 1904, and which have become necessary in view of the possible appointment of three Commissioners. One of these provisions is that two of the three Commissioners shall form a quorum. The other provision is of considerable importance, and may give rise to some discussion. It refers to the prominence accorded to the chairman's opinion. In some States the majority of Commissioners rules but in Victoria the principle is established that in the case of a difference of opinion between the two junior Commissioners on the one hand, and the chairman on the other, the discussion shall be adjourned for not less than 24 hours, and that if then it is found that the junior Commissioners are unable to agree with the chairman, the chairman's opinion shall prevail, and that he shall enter upon the minutes of proceedings his reasons for concurring in his conclusion, and that he shall forward those reasons to the Minister for presentation to Parliament. The experience has

been that this proves a check upon the Chief Commissioner acting in an arbitrary manner. The other method, that of allowing the possibility of the two junior Commissioners overriding the chairman, would place the chairman in a somewhat invidious position, and would not be likely to lead to good results. The matter, however, is one which may be more fully dealt with in Committee; and I trust that, as a side issue, it will not affect the general discussion on the measure. In view of the serious position in which our railways are placed, the necessity for a change, the fact of the establishment of the system of administration by three commissioners, the Government consider themselves entitled to ask the House to agree to an extension of that established system to this State, and to appoint three commissioners to manage, maintain, and control the railways of Western Australia. I venture to hope that if those three Commissioners are wisely chosen, and work as honestly and as assiduously and as loyally as the present Commissioner, their combined efforts will be to the advantage of the State, and that the entire railway system will be in a better position at the end of their term than it is in to-day, and will prove a satisfaction to the owners of the railway system, namely the people of Western Australia. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. P. Collier debate adjourned.

#### BILL—DISCHARGED SOLDIERS SETTLEMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 17th October; Hon. G. Taylor in the Chair, the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clause 3 — Interpretation (partly considered):

Mr. PICKERING: I move an amendment—

That in the interpretation of "Dependant," the word "mother," in line 1 be struck out and "parent" inserted in lieu. It is quite possible and indeed probable, that in many cases the father may be just as dependent on the soldier as the mother, and provision should be made for him.

The PREMIER: This definition of "dependant" is that in force in all the other States. The father is not generally recognised as likely to require assistance under this measure. He is in a position to work for himself, unlike the mother, especially if she is a widow. The father of a soldier should not require assistance under this measure if he has been an industrious man. Moreover, a father fit to go on the land, could not well be said to be a dependant on his son. On the other hand, if he is a dependant on the son, he will not be fit to go on the land. The mother might, with the help of her other children, be in a position to take up land under this measure. I hope the amendment will not be pressed.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I had marked on my copy of the Bill an amendment similar to this one, which I hope will be carried. I am totally unable to follow the Premier's logic in

opposing the amendment. It is easily conceivable that supposititious cases such as those quoted by the Premier, of a widowed mother with a family to maintain and rear, could also apply to the father of a soldier, and with equal force. The father may have been left a widower with a young family. The fact that a father may have been dependent upon his son for a period of 12 months prior to the son's going to the war, is not to say at all that the father was necessarily of lazy habits or indifferent character. This definition of "dependant" may be the same as that in the Eastern States Acts; nevertheless, it would be a grave mistake to omit the father from it. For example, if the mother should be dead, then none of the other brothers or sisters could be classed as dependants under this definition, since they could not be called orphans so long as the father was living. The soldier's father, if left with a number of children, the brothers and sisters of the boy killed at the war, ought to be assisted under this measure; and it is highly desirable that the father, even though a man up in years, should have the opportunity of obtaining the benefits of this measure in order to enable him to rear the other brothers and sisters. I cannot discover any argument at all that would justify a mother being classed as a dependant but would not apply with equal force to the father. We know of cases in which there have been two or even three boys lost from one family. If the mother should be dead as well, is the Bill going to deny to the father, who may have been dependent on those three boys, the opportunity of taking up land? It may have been that the father was dependent on the three sons at the express wish of those sons, who desired to see their father taking things easy in his declining years.

Mr. Teesdale: If he has any strength and bodily health he can earn his own living.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Is he not entitled to some consideration by reason of the fact that he has lost his boys at the war? He may be strong and healthy enough, but it is not easy to start out afresh and face the battle of life again after losing those on whom one was dependent in one's declining years. I see no reason why we should deny to such a father the opportunity of taking up land under favourable conditions. I hope the amendment will be carried.

Mr. PICKERING: I regret that the Premier should rely on the fact that this provision is taken from an Act in another State.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is as far as this Government can go; they must follow other people.

Mr. PICKERING: I know of a father who is dependent on the three sons he has sent to the war. There is also the point about "orphan." I think the Committee will be well advised to pass the amendment.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): I should like to point out why the provision is worded as it is. As hon. members know, a conference was held at which the Federal Government and all the States were represented. It was decided at that conference that "dependant" should be de-



fined as they are defined in the clause. It is not that we are blindly following other Acts.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But it is so in all the Bills we get.

Hon. P. Collier: But if an oversight has been made, are we not to correct it? If we correct it, is our action likely to affect the monetary consideration?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): Probably not. The question of dependants was discussed at the conference, and the definition given in the clause was resolved upon.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I think some representative of the soldier should have the right to take up land. The Bill should provide for that.

Hon. P. Collier: That is what is aimed at, but why should the father be excluded?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No member of the family, certainly not the father, should be excluded. If the Minister attended the conference at which the definition was framed, it is only natural that that definition should be included here, but I hope it will be amended. In some countries it has been determined that a representative of the family to receive the benefits accruing to the dead soldier should be nominated by the family.

The PREMIER: I am not wedded to every word in the Bill. I desire to make a good Bill. At the conference between the Federal Government and the States the definition of "dependants" was agreed upon. It was also agreed that settlement on the land should be made a State function, and the Federal Government offered to loan a certain sum of money to each State for the settlement of returned soldiers on the land. I think it was largely on the understanding that the report of the conference, including the definition, should be adopted that the Federal Government undertook to make those loans. I believe that the conditions then entered into have from time to time been modified. It was agreed, in the first instance, that the money loaned should only be expended in certain directions, and I know that those conditions have been modified. But we cannot make use of this £500 per man except on certain conditions. If we want those conditions extended we have to get the authority of the Federal Government. I do not know whether the Federal Government would object to inserting the word "parent" instead of "mother" in this definition. The Federal Government might take exception and say that if we effect this amendment they would not agree to the money advanced for the settlement on the land being used for the purpose.

Mr. Pilkington: The definition agreed to by the conference did not contain the words "orphan brother" or "orphan sister."

The PREMIER: No. "Dependant," as defined at the conference means—

The wife, widow or mother, and children, or ex-nuptial children, of a member of the forces who are wholly or in part

dependent upon his earnings at any time during the period of 12 months prior to his enlistment.

In the definition framed by the conference no provision was made in regard to orphan brother or orphan sister, so I take it the States have amended the definition arrived at by the conference. Only one person can receive this assistance, so perhaps, under the circumstances, there will not be any very great harm done by inserting "parent" instead of "mother."

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. ROCKE: I am in favour of the amendment. The brother of a deceased soldier will become entitled to the benefits of this provision when the father dies, but not before. This seems to be rather a peculiar provision and I cannot see why it has been embodied in the Bill. If the Commonwealth refuse to grant assistance, as the Premier fears they may, I shall not be surprised, because I think the Commonwealth are trying to shelve their responsibilities on to the State in every possible way.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I do not know why paragraph (c) of Subclause 1 has been inserted. What does it matter to the Committee whether a soldier is supporting in any way any people who will be regarded as dependants? Many young men went to the war long before they could assist in the support of their people. They may have left debts. Why should such families be excluded from the benefits of the Bill, and why has this provision been inserted?

The PREMIER: The hon. member desires that any relative of a soldier shall have all the advantages of the Bill, whether such relatives were dependant or not.

Hon. J. Mitchell: That is so.

The PREMIER: Then, there would be no need for the word "dependant," which means someone who has been dependant on the soldier.

Hon. J. Mitchell: It sets up a restriction.

The PREMIER: It sets up the meaning of the conditions which must apply to the dependant. Unless the dependant was really or in part dependant on the earnings of the deceased soldier he or she would not become entitled to the benefits under the Bill.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Such conditions should not be set up.

Hon. P. Collier: The hon. member thinks it should be open to anyone whether dependant or not.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Whether assistance is wanted or not.

The PREMIER: I should like to hear hon. members on the subject. Of course, a young man of 18 might have contributed to the support of his parents or other people before he went to the war. I see no reason, however, to widen the scope of the clause, which should meet all cases requiring treatment under the Bill.

Mr. MULLANY: This Bill should be made as wide in its application as possible. I believe it would serve its purposes better if para-

graph (c) were struck out altogether. It might occur that there would be cases of young men up to 18 or 19 who had left school and gone directly into the forces, but unfortunately lost their lives. Possibly, the parents of these boys were not actually dependant upon them at the time and had endeavoured to give them the best education they could, but had the war not occurred, these boys would probably have been contributing something towards the maintenance to their parents as recompense for the sacrifices that had been made on their behalf. If the clause is allowed to remain as it stands, these parents could not come under the provisions of the Bill. They must be dependant wholly or in part upon the deceased or discharged soldier, but in my opinion these cases ought to be met. I move an amendment—

That paragraph (c) of Subclause 1 be struck out.

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

Ayes .. .. .	14
Noes .. .. .	18

Majority against ..	4
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#### AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Collier	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Davies	Mr. Roche
Mr. Holman	Mr. Walker
Mr. Johnston	Mr. O'Loghlen
Mr. Jones	(Teller.)
Mr. Lambert	

#### NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. Broun	Mr. Smith
Mr. Brown	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Duff	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Varyard
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Maley	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Money	(Teller.)
Mr. Pilkington	

Amendment thus negatived.

Mr. THOMSON: I move a further amendment—

That in the definition of "discharged soldier" the words "being or having been a resident in the Commonwealth or the Dominion of New Zealand was appointed as an officer or enlisted as member of the naval or military forces of the Commonwealth, or" be struck out.

The object of the amendment is to bring any man who has served in the forces, no matter where he may have enlisted, within the definition, so that he may have the right to participate in the land settlement scheme as though he had been living in Western Australia prior to the war. The definition as it stands confines the provisions of the measure to those who have enlisted in the Commonwealth. A man who has fought for his country and who may desire to come here should have the opportunity of doing so.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Where is the money coming from?

Mr. THOMSON: We are only guaranteeing the money; it will have to be repaid to the State by the individual.

The PREMIER: If the hon. member looks at the next page he will find there power for the Minister to extend the definition to any person "who, not being or having been resident in the Commonwealth or the Dominion of New Zealand, was appointed as an officer or enlisted as a member of the naval or military forces of the United Kingdom or of any of His Majesty's Dominions, and has been on active service in the war and has received his discharge and is resident in the Commonwealth." We should have discretionary power to deal with the soldiers who come from outside, and we will be on safer ground if we have that power.

Mr. SMITH: Notwithstanding what the Premier has told us the clause giving the Minister power to extend the definition is not satisfactory. It is optional. Many Australians at the beginning of the war may not have been residents of Australia.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): If they were born here it would apply.

Mr. SMITH: We should leave it open to all. I have no doubt the other States will make the conditions as easy as possible, and we should do the same.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The amendment goes too far, inasmuch as the hon. member proposes to strike out the reference to Australians. It would be sufficient if he merely struck out the words "being or having been a resident in the Commonwealth or the Dominion of New Zealand."

Hon. P. Collier: It says, "His Majesty's Dominions." Why specify any when this is one of His Majesty's Dominions?

Mr. JOHNSTON: The intention of the member for Katanning would be better expressed by merely striking out the words I have suggested.

Mr. PICKERING: I support the amendment because we are in need of population. We should welcome the influx of a large volume of settlers which the State is crying out for.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We are all agreeable to assist any person from the Old Country to settle in Western Australia, but we must look at it from the fact that this Bill is particularly for returned soldiers from Australia. This is not an immigration Bill or otherwise it would be an entirely different matter. Sir Rider Haggard anticipated that we would get thousands of soldiers in Australia after the war, but if it goes forward that these men can come here in shiploads and we have to find £500 for each man, where will the Government get the money to settle the men? I only hope there will be plenty of money. This clause provides principally for our own soldiers and if funds are available the Minister can extend that. But if we accept anyone who likes to come it places the Government in an awkward position.

Hon. T. WALKER: I cannot get out of my mind that it is our boys we are trying to prepare for, as distinct from the boys enlisting in Great Britain and elsewhere.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Or South Africa.

Hon. T. WALKER: From the commencement of the war we have declared that we are going to do our utmost for those who risked their lives and made many sacrifices to participate in the war; that we were going to give them a welcome back not only by cheers and hat throwing, but a solid welcome so that their future will be secured. There is the expression of a desire to fulfil that undertaking which we made at the commencement of hostilities, but to make it merely a land settlement scheme or an immigration Bill is really to diminish the value to our own boys.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Oh, no.

Hon. T. WALKER: What special advantages do our boys get over the citizens, say, of South Africa?

Hon. J. Mitchell: Why should they?

Hon. P. Collier: Certainly they should.

Hon. T. WALKER: What is the Bill for? To repatriate our own citizens. Everyone knows that men left their billets here and gave up their chances for their future, made a complete break in their lives and they will come back here to start for the future. They should not come back to find that there is no special provision made for them. If this Bill is not to repatriate our own soldiers, the title should be altered. I feel that the power is almost too great to insert on the authority of the Minister to extend the operation to those who may have enlisted elsewhere and are not entitled to be called Australians.

Mr. Pickering: The provision exists in all the Acts.

Hon. T. WALKER: We are trying to do what they will not do in other parts of Australia—to put the Australians on the same starting point as every other soldier who has fought in the war. We should have some particular regard for our own men. The funds for these are limited and the men from South Africa or Canada or elsewhere can come along and say, "I am entitled to the privileges of the Bill," and get their share and footing in, and when the ultimate allotment is made we may find that we have not the funds, and some of our own are cut out. When we have made provision for those who left Australia then it is the time to extend the privileges. When we have seen that none of our soldiers are unprotected, then we can afford to be generous. Until every son of Australia is amply provided for, I will not put them on the level with all the world to secure the £500. We must consider it our stern duty to see that every soldier of our own is amply provided for, that is our first duty. We can afford to be generous to others when we have done our whole and complete duty to them, not before.

Mr. PILKINGTON: One member interjected, "Would the amendment, if carried,

cut out our own men." It appears to me it might very seriously prejudice our own men in this way: under this scheme of settling soldiers on the land, Western Australia became responsible for every penny piece of money advanced to the soldiers. It is impossible to conceive that any such scheme like this being carried out without a large proportion of failures. That is no blame to the soldiers. In a year or two after the scheme is started we shall find there is a large number of failures in the hands of Western Australia, and their repatriation will not have been completed, and the duty of completely repatriating these men will have to be performed. We shall have to find the money to do that. That duty in a few years will come on this country, and we must be in a position to see that we do not fail when the ardour of the war and the excitement is passed. If we were to introduce any considerable number of immigrants under the scheme, who are not our own soldiers, we might very easily find that the task we imposed on ourselves was too great for our performance and our own men would be prejudiced. The day will come when we have to go through the repatriation of these men again, and we must be prepared to undertake it. If we undertake to do more than we can do, we shall prejudice these men.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: If to pass this amendment meant to injure any single Australian soldier, I would not vote for it, but it will do nothing of the sort. We have assisted hundreds of British people who have come out here previously. I do not for a moment think that in passing the amendment we shall be jeopardising the interests of a single Australian soldier. Time and again I have heard that our soldiers are not likely to go on the land. If the soldier are to be repatriated, they can only be repatriated successfully, and set up in civil life if they return to a country which is prosperous thanks to the activity of its primary industries. What is the use of fearing that we shall get too many returned soldiers? We expect to get 4,000 of our own men. But shall we get them? Even on the calculation made at the conference of Ministers in 1917 the number estimated was 14,000; and that leaves room for 10,000 British soldiers. Let it be remembered that the Commonwealth Government find the money for this repatriation on the land, and that the Commonwealth Government have definitely stated that the scheme shall apply to members of the British navy and military forces who have served in the present war. The Premier proposes that the advantages of the scheme shall be extended to British soldiers and sailors at the will of the Minister. But if the British soldier or sailor knows of even such a provision and comes out here, the Minister will be practically bound to extend the benefits of the scheme to him.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: What you propose is not embodied in any other Australian repatriation Act.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: But we are told that our own soldiers will not go on the land.

Hon. T. Walker: They will not all go on the land.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: This is our opportunity to secure settlers. Our position, and also that of Queensland, are entirely different from that of the other Eastern States, in that Western Australia and Queensland have enormous areas of country available, whilst New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania have very little land to spare. But even those States have agreed to do what the amendment proposes. The other night the Premier told us that he could settle 300,000 people on our lands.

The Premier: No; that the country was capable of carrying that number of settlers.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We know, of course, that so enormous a number could not be settled in one year; but we have settled thousands in a single year. I am very anxious that we should hold out some definite offer to British soldiers and sailors, even if the other Australian States have not done so.

Hon. T. Walker: But I would not put them on scratch with our own men.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I do not know why the Committee hesitate to include the British soldier and sailor. We know, of course, that even after the war is over it will take a couple of years to bring back our own men. We may not be able to get British soldiers as settlers. The question of development has to be faced, and it is merely a question whether we shall settle our lands with our own soldiers, or with British soldiers, or with ordinary citizens.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): Hon. members, on turning to page 3 of the Bill, will see that it is not intended to debar men who have enlisted in the Imperial forces. The Federal Act itself states that Australia will help such men on proof of residence in Australia prior to enlistment.

Hon. J. Mitchell: But that Act does not refer to land settlement.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): The member for Sussex says that the other Australian States are throwing open the door to all.

Mr. Pickering: I did not say that.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): It has been pointed out by the member for Kanowna that we have not unlimited funds.

Hon. P. Collier: If we are honest, we will also point out that we have not unlimited areas of land either.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Oh yes, we have.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): If, in the future, we have the land and the money available, I am sure all of us will welcome the British soldiers. But we have to look after our own men, and must first of all see what can be done for them. This is a repatriation Bill providing for the settlement, first of all, of our own soldiers on the land; and I hope hon. members will not agree to the amendment.

Mr. PICKERING: I made no such statement as that attributed to me by the Honorary Minister. I said that we had a similar clause to that which says "may extend." The legislation of the Eastern States shows a wider

view than that which is taken by members here, and especially members opposite. If British soldiers come here, is it to be merely at the will of the Minister whether the benefits of this measure are to be extended to them? In view of the tremendous sacrifices made by the British Empire, which, let us always remember, adopted conscription, we should show our appreciation of the British soldier.

Mr. HARRISON: I quite agree with all members who have advocated the extension, as far as possible, of the advantages of this Bill; but where is all the money to come from? We are not going to get unlimited finance to start with. We do not know how many British soldiers will come along, or when they are coming along. If our own soldiers had to wait for a period, while funds had to be drawn from the Imperial Government to settle in Western Australia soldiers from other parts of the British Empire, the effect would be deplorable.

Mr. Smith: What about the British soldier who comes out here and then finds himself turned down?

Mr. HARRISON: I do not think British soldiers will be turned down. If that happens, it is extremely likely also to happen to our own returned soldiers, because it can only happen on account of lack of funds. Should soldiers come here in large numbers from England, it will be up to the Imperial Government to help in the matter of finance. I do not believe in extending the Bill so as to lead soldiers of other parts of the British Empire to believe that they are bound to receive the benefits of the measure. I do not think Ministers wish to debar anyone from Great Britain establishing himself on our lands, but I am sure we ought not to bind our Ministers when we know their limitations in regard to giving preference.

Mr. THOMSON: I am surprised at the attitude hon. members have adopted towards the amendment. The member for Avon wants to know where the money is to come from, and asks, "Are our own soldiers to wait?" British soldiers have been invited by the Australian soldiers to come out here. Are we so small-minded as to refuse to give those men the same privileges as our own men will enjoy? Those British soldiers have fought side by side with our own men and, seeing that we are portion of the British Empire, I think those men have a perfect right to come out here. After all, many of the men who went from Western Australia were Englishmen, were despised "Pommies," as they are called.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Who despises them?

Hon. P. Collier: On whom are you casting reflections now?

Mr. THOMSON: I am not casting any reflections. I am a "Pommy" myself, and I am not ashamed of it.

Mr. Jones: But you make some of the rest of us ashamed.

Mr. THOMSON: The member for Perth has said that if we gave those men the same privileges as our own men are to receive it might seriously prejudice the case of our own men, because, after all, Western Australia is

responsible for the money. Does not the hon. member realise that every man going on the land must first appear before the qualification board? Under our existing legislation any Britisher may come out here and take up land with the assurance of assistance from the Agricultural Bank. Why should we deny similar opportunity to British soldiers? They have fought under the same conditions as our own men.

Hon. P. Collier: French, Belgians, Portuguese—all have fought under the same conditions and for the same cause. Would you extend the privilege to them all?

Hon. T. Walker: Would you extend it to the Indians, the Japanese and the Moroccans?

Mr. THOMSON: If the hon. member is so very broad-minded as to wish to include the Indians and Moroccans, let him do so.

Mr. Pilkington: Your amendment includes the Indians now.

Mr. THOMSON: Under our present Commonwealth laws the Indians cannot come into this State.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That does not alter your amendment.

Mr. THOMSON: What seems to be worrying members opposite is the apprehension that this is an immigration Bill and that we are going to bring out British soldiers. We want population, and what better class of immigrants could we have than men tried and proved on the battlefields? We should do our duty to those men.

Mr. Harrison: And we should see to it that we meet our obligations.

Mr. THOMSON: If the State is to get out of its present difficulties, we must have immigration.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not in order in discussing the general question of immigration.

Mr. THOMSON: If my amendment is carried, we can provide for British soldiers. It is to be remembered that we are not necessarily going to advance £500 to every man who comes out. He must first prove himself qualified. In my humble opinion we are not going to get too many Australian soldiers to go on the land, and if we can supplement the number with desirable British soldiers, we ought to be glad to do so. I hope the amendment will be agreed to.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Honorary Minister just now referred to the Federal repatriation work. I would remind the Minister that their work does not extend to land at all. The States have that duty entirely in their hands. It has been said that we have not sufficient land to provide for our own soldiers and for British soldiers too. I may say that there need not be any apprehension about the sufficiency of the land available.

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

Ayes .. .. .	5
Noes .. .. .	27
Majority against ..	22

## AYES.

Mr. Mitchell	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Pickering	Mr. Griffiths
Mr. Smith	(Teller.)

## NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Lambert
Mr. Angwin	Mr. Lefroy
Mr. Broun	Mr. Maley
Mr. Brown	Mr. Money
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Collier	Mr. Pilkington
Mr. Davies	Mr. Rocks
Mr. Draper	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Duff	Mr. Underwood
Mr. George	Mr. Veryard
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Walker
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Jones	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Mr. MONEY: I move an amendment—

That after the definition of "discharged soldier" the following be added:—"District Board" means a local discharged soldiers' land settlement board constituted under this Act by and for such area as decided by the Discharged Soldiers' Land Settlement Board with the approval of the Minister."

If this Bill is to be successful it must, in a large measure, be administered locally. The returned soldier must have some board or committee in his own district, which will be responsible to the central board for the administration of the Act in that particular district. To ask a returned soldier to travel, say 600 miles, to Perth, to interview the central authority would be unreasonable, costly, and unsatisfactory. If a district local board could be appointed to deal with and assist the returned soldier, great good might come of the Bill. The members of such district boards need not receive any payment for their services. I have discussed this Bill with many returned soldiers, who are entirely in accord with me in the suggestion I have put forward. Without such district boards I do not think the principles of the Bill can be successfully carried out.

The PREMIER: We have to look upon this Bill as a business matter. We already provide for the appointment of a central board with wide powers. The board can delegate their powers to any person approved by the Minister, and may accept and act upon the report of such person.

Mr. Money: That only refers to individuals and not to a committee or body.

The PREMIER: The intention is, if it is found necessary in a certain district, to appoint a body of persons to report to and assist the central board power, and this is provided for. The proposal of the hon. member would be a great mistake. I do not think we should appoint statutory boards, for we should only be making trouble for ourselves. There is already sufficient power in this direction given under the Bill.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: In my opinion the definition of "board" is already sufficiently provided for. We can, if necessary, always provide that district boards should come under

that definition. If the hon. member desires this, I suggest that he should draft a new clause providing for the appointment of district boards, to be embodied in the Bill later.

Mr. MALEY: I am opposed to the amendment. It is only creating another link in this long chain of departmental circumlocution. The creation of this board will not be necessary. We ought to cut out the provision so that the board will consist of the present land board with a representative of the returned soldiers on that board.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The member for Bunbury might state to the Committee precisely what he desires the board to do. He has not been permitted to discuss the functions of the board now, and the Committee will have to decide without that knowledge. I suggest that he withdraw the amendment, and later on set out what work the board shall do, and the functions they shall perform. And if it becomes necessary later on we can amplify or extend the duties.

Mr. MONEY: With the consent of the Committee, I ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Mr. SMITH: I move an amendment—

That in the definition of "Minister," in line 1, after the second word "Minister" the words "for Lands or other the responsible Minister of the Crown" be struck out.

In Clause 5 I shall propose an amendment. I desire to provide for the election of the Minister, who shall have the administration of this Bill, being elected by Parliament, instead of providing that the Minister for Lands be charged with the administration.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the hon. member propose that the House shall elect the Minister?

Mr. SMITH: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: There is no machinery by which the House can do so.

Mr. SMITH: In any case it is not necessary to include the words which I propose shall be struck out. There is no sense in them.

Hon. T. WALKER: The words are necessary or an Honorary Minister might be placed in charge. We must keep "responsible Minister" in.

The PREMIER: "Minister" in every Act of Parliament means a portfolioed Minister. An Honorary Minister is not a Minister of the Crown.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Merely a member of the Executive Council.

The PREMIER: This is the interpretation used in all Acts. It defines what Minister shall have charge of the Act, and it must be a portfolioed Minister. If the Minister for Lands for the time being has too many duties to perform, then some other Minister will discharge the duties under this Bill for him. Nothing will be gained by striking out the words.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause, as previously amended, agreed to.

Clause 5—Persons to whom this Act applies:

Hon. P. COLLIER: What does paragraph (b) mean?

Hon. J. Mitchell: Soldiers who have already selected.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Will this Bill apply to soldiers who have been settled on lands other than Crown lands, such as the Riverton estate?

The PREMIER: They all become Crown lands; they have been mortgaged to the Crown.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Riverton was presented as a free gift to the men.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Presented to each man as a free gift?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Then it is not Crown lands.

The PREMIER: With regard to the Riverton estate, that has not been transferred to the Crown, but repurchased estates have been transferred to the Crown. The Riverton land was transferred straight to each returned soldier, but the lands have become mortgaged to the Government. It might be wise to make some alteration in the clause to meet such cases. The words "permitted to occupy any Crown lands or other land in anticipation of the passing of the Act" might be inserted.

Hon. T. Walker: There is danger in that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier might look into the matter and, if necessary, an amendment can be made elsewhere.

The PREMIER: I think the matter will be found to be covered somewhere in the Bill.

Mr. PICKERING: Paragraph (a) of Sub-clause 2 apparently means that the soldier discharged for misconduct is to be punished for ever. Is he to be regarded as having committed the unpardonable sin?

The PREMIER: The measure applies only to any man for two years after his discharge, and therefore the punishment does not continue for ever. But we must have some such provision.

Hon. T. WALKER: The man is not a soldier if he is discharged for misconduct.

Mr. Thompson: But what is misconduct?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He may have neglected to shave himself.

The PREMIER: He may have deserted; or he may have become incapacitated through engaging in a brawl.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I should like to see the question of whether a soldier discharged for misconduct should be deprived of the benefits of this measure left to the board's decision. Many soldiers have been discharged for mere military offences.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): It would be something serious.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Possibly a breach of the military regulations. We know that some of our young men are high-spirited, and that in the past they have resented the language in which they were addressed by their officers. I have knowledge of one case where an officer applied a vile epithet to a private, and the private asked whether the officer meant him by that epithet, and, be-

ing told yes, struck the officer. That soldier was court-martialled and imprisoned. The affair occurred, I believe, in Gallipoli. Subsequently, the soldier re-enlisted, and won honours in France. In the earlier stages of the war men were discharged for offences which were not thus punished later in the war. I should like to have the cases of such men reviewed by a civil board, who should have power to decide whether the benefits of this measure should apply to the soldier. The subsequent paragraph, referring to dependants of the soldier, is still harsher. His dependants are to be punished for the soldier's offence.

Mr. MALEY: In my time only a discharged soldier received the certificate of discharge; the man who was dismissed received no discharge at all, but was simply drummed out of the force.

Mr. PICKERING: I move an amendment—

That in Paragraph (a), after the word "default," there be inserted "Provided that such discharged soldier or his dependants may appeal to the board to have his case reviewed."

Mr. JONES: I am not sure that the amendment goes far enough, because the review of the case would frequently involve the calling of many witnesses. A discharge is granted to all members of the A.I.F., and the wording of the conduct clause of the discharge depends upon the reason for the discharge.

Mr. ROCKE: But the character is not shown now.

Mr. JONES: No; I believe not. But how could a board of such limited powers review the question of a man's discharge? The man would state his side of the case, and the Defence Department would state their side. The difficulty would be to get the witnesses along.

Mr. SMITH: Judges do not call witnesses when reviewing cases. It is not necessary to call witnesses for that purpose.

Mr. JONES: Personally, I would be very disinclined to take the word of the Defence Department in a matter of this kind, because they regard the matter simply from the military standpoint. "Misconduct" may be the simplest thing in the world: it may be simply that the private soldier could not get on with his officer. Is the private to be debarred from the benefits of this measure because, perhaps, the officer was not a decent fellow? In the absence of a better provision, I shall support the amendment of the member for Sussex, though I do not think it will get over the difficulty.

Mr. PILKINGTON: I do not think the amendment of the member for Sussex will attain the object he desires. Merely to provide that the board shall review cases without giving the board power to say that the measure shall apply, is insufficient. I suggest that the object would be attained by inserting after the word "default" these words, "and the board certifies that in its opinion the benefits of the Act should not be

extended to him." Those words would produce the effect desired.

Mr. PICKERING: I ask leave to withdraw my amendment in favour of the amendment suggested by the member for Perth. Amendment (Mr. Pickering's) by leave withdrawn.

Mr. PILKINGTON: I move an amendment—

That in Paragraph (a), after the word "default," there be inserted "and the board certifies that in its opinion the benefits of this Act should not be extended to him."

The PREMIER: A man is not dismissed from the army except for very good reasons. I would prefer to see the clause remain as it is.

Mr. THOMSON: Suppose a man has served three years and is then dismissed.

The PREMIER: He would only be dismissed for a grave offence. I know that in the old days men were dismissed from the army and they declared that the dismissal was for striking a superior officer, when that was not always the case. There was always something at the back of it. I do not think the words the hon. members desires to insert will have much effect, except to give trouble.

Mr. PILKINGTON: A man might be guilty of a serious military offence and yet be entitled to the benefits of the Act.

The PREMIER: I have no objection to the amendment, but at the same time it will not do any good.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. ROCKE: I move a further amendment—

That paragraph (b) of Subclause 2 be struck out.

If a soldier is punished in perpetuity for what he may have done, it is apart from all sense of justice that his dependants should be punished also. If the paragraph is to be interpreted literally it will bring about a peculiar position. For instance the last words of the paragraph are, "owing to misconduct or incapacity resulting from his own default." A man possessing an excessive zeal for duty might bring that about.

Amendment put and passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 5—The Board:

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I doubt whether administration by a board is necessary, and I think the provision in the Bill is inconsistent with the ordinary provisions of the Land Act. If we are not careful we shall make it far more difficult for a soldier to settle on the land than for a civilian. What control can this board have over this great question? They have not the power to order a single block of land to be surveyed and they will have no control over the Lands or the Survey Department, and not a suspicion of control over the Agricultural Department. I think the Minister should take the responsibility. It is true that the board will inquire into the qualifications of soldiers.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The board are doing that now.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Yes, this board. I cannot see why the board is wanted at all.

Mr. Brown: They can make recommendations.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: They can express the pious hope that the Agricultural Department will make an advance. What effect will that have on the trustees? I hope the Committee will strike out the clause altogether or, failing that, will appoint merely an advisory board. I suggest that we delete the clause.

The Minister for Works: You will have to delete an important part of the Bill.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: If we appoint a board it should be a board including a trustee of the Agricultural Bank, a representative of the Eastern districts, a representative of the South-West, and a representative of the pastoral industry. It is provided that the board shall administer the Act, under the control of the Minister. In my opinion the Minister should take the full responsibility of administering the Act.

Hon. T. WALKER: The hon. member gives his case away by suggesting the appointment of even an advisory board. The whole responsibility for the administration of the measure should be taken by the Government themselves. We are whittling away every fraction of Responsible Government. Imagine the Minister playing second fiddle to an irresponsible board in the administration of the measure! We are getting boards for everything, while the Government merely sit there and give us the benefit of their benign presence in this Chamber. Under a proposal of this sort the Government can at any time say, "We are not at fault; it is the board. We will change the board." In any ideal form of Government the Ministers are solely responsible. I suggest that we amend the clause to read, "This Act shall be administered by the Minister in control of the Act and such officers as the Government may appoint." That will throw the entire responsibility for the administration of the Act upon the Government of the day.

Mr. Draper: Are not they responsible now?

Hon. T. WALKER: Does not the hon. member see how the Minister for the time being will be able to throw the blame on somebody else? In every other Bill we make the officers of the Government responsible for carrying out the details, while we make the Minister responsible for the administration. But here we are committing the administration to a board supposed to be under the control of the Minister. It is akin to the appointment of the Fremantle Harbour Trust, it is taking all responsibility from the Government. I know of nothing so vital to our future as this provision. If this scheme of land settlement is to be successful, Ministers must be personally active in the matter, and must have control of their officers, must have them directly under observation, and must be responsible for the appointment and change of those officers. I trust the Committee will see the wisdom of this course in making the Government responsible.

The Minister for Works: Is not the Minister responsible under the clause?

Hon. T. WALKER: No.

The Minister for Works: Of course he is.

Hon. T. WALKER: In a sense, in the way the Minister for Railways is responsible for the management of the railways. We know what happens in the Railway Department; the Commissioner in some instances can snap his fingers at the Minister.

The Minister for Works: It is not so here.

Hon. T. WALKER: But it is. The Act is to be administered by a board, under the control of the Minister. What is the control of the Minister? He cannot interfere if the board is carrying out the duties allotted to it.

The Premier: He can say whether the board is doing right or wrong.

Hon. T. WALKER: That is not enough. If the board is carrying out its allotted duties, where is the Minister's control?

The Premier: The board will only hold office at the Governor's pleasure.

Hon. T. WALKER: But it is to do the work which the Ministers, through their officers, should do. We must have it so that we are able to reach the Minister, who must be in immediate contact with the work.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Is there any detail of this work so big as to require a board?

Hon. T. WALKER: I do not know that there is. If we are to go on the example set us by the Government in their keen supervision of these outside boards, we must dread the handing over of this measure to an irresponsible body. The proposal is fraught with immense danger.

The Minister for Works: What about the Workers' Homes Boards?

Hon. T. WALKER: I do not approve of even that.

The Minister for Works: Or the Tender Board?

Hon. T. WALKER: Whenever a board has been appointed in this Chamber, I have opposed it. I have always had an objection to whittling away responsibility and making Parliament the lifeless, dead object it is, a mere floating raft with dead bodies on it drifting down the stream of destiny. No nation has been as free from bureaucracies or boards as has been the British nation.

The Minister for Works: What about the Board of Trade?

Hon. T. WALKER: That is a Ministerial department, merely called a board of trade for the purpose of distinguishing it from other departments. It is really carrying out the principle I am now putting forward, that is of direct Ministerial control.

The Minister for Works: Why do you not add words to give you what you want?

Hon. T. WALKER: I would rather take out this surplussage of words so that there can be no misunderstanding on the score of the responsibility of the Minister. I move an amendment—

That in Subclause 1 the words "under the control of the Minister" be struck out, with a view to inserting other words.

Mr. DRAPER: I understand the object of the member for Kanowna, but when he says that in practice this measure will not be administered under the control of the Minister, I cannot follow him. There is a great deal



of unnecessary confusion in this clause. There can be no reason why the board should be made a corporation at all, and it may be necessary later to strike out Subclause 7. I cannot agree that the board is a bad thing. The time of Ministers will be fully occupied with their offices for a long time to come, and to throw any additional work upon them probably means the appointment of another Minister and another department. I see no reason why the board should not carry out certain duties, which it would be idle to expect the Minister to carry out. We must have some kind of board. Surely a good deal of useful work might be done by outsiders, who would not be hide-bound by the system of red tape, and who will exercise the ordinary common sense of the community, and will decide on applications that are made by men who have come to know that the one thing to consider in life is reality. A board will be a very much better body to deal with returned soldiers than would be an ordinary department of the civil service. Such a board must be under the control of the Minister, but I see no reason why it should be an incorporate body.

The PREMIER: If the Committee is going to eliminate the clauses dealing with the board, the Bill will be destroyed altogether. To alter the Bill in this way would be inconsistent, because members have already passed the definition of a board.

Hon. T. Walker: You could not debate the merits of the board on the definition.

The PREMIER: If hon. members desired to abolish the board they should have abolished the definition. The Committee have already decided that there shall be a board.

Hon. P. Collier: We passed the definition in the event of a board being decided on afterwards.

The PREMIER: If we do away with the board there is no need for the definition. If this board is not constituted, the Minister will have to appoint a body of officers to carry out the necessary duties. The Minister cannot be expected to do all the work. The board is not a permanent body and will only hold office during the Governor's pleasure. It is not responsible to anyone but the Minister. I would remind members that this provision is very similar to that which has been inserted in Acts passed in the Eastern States. I see no necessity for Subclause 7 of Clause 5, and I pointed this out to the draftsman, who, however, told me that it was a provision which was inserted in the case of all boards. I am willing to eliminate that subclause, but I hope the Committee will not alter the clause in such a way as to render impracticable the administration of the measure.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If I thought the appointment of the board likely to contribute to the more efficient administration of the measure, I should be prepared to support it at once; but I do not think it will tend in that direction. Why should a board be required for the land settlement of soldiers any more than for the land settlement that has been taking place here for so many decades? The Minister for Lands, or the Minister for Repatriation, has available all necessary machinery and

advice for the land settlement of soldiers, in the form of the Lands Department, the Agricultural Department, and the Agricultural Bank. If we were launching out on something new or something experimental, the need for the appointment of a board would be arguable.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Would you do away with the soldiers' representative?

Hon. P. COLLIER: The soldiers' representative is only one among five members; and what is wanted on the board, if constituted, is not a man who can argue about war, but one who can argue about land settlement. Really, the board will mean nothing but a convenient, handy, go-between to shoulder the blame for any shortcomings in the administration of this measure, thus sheltering the Minister. It would be far better to make the Minister himself directly responsible. It is going altogether too far to assert that the constitution of the board means all the difference between a valuable measure and a valueless one. The board have power merely in the selection of applicants to come under the scheme; in all other matters the board can merely recommend. No one who knows the management of the Agricultural Bank will believe that they will act upon anything but their own judgment, or that they will be in any way influenced by the advice of an irresponsible board. The board will have a strong tendency to increase and multiply the complications of which so much has been heard. Is not another board fresh in the minds of members of the Country party? I refer to the Wheat Scheme, on whose behalf the farmers have been so persistently urging that executive power should be granted. I prefer to have this measure administered by the Minister. The Premier himself has told us that we are not going to get so many returned soldiers to settle on our lands as has generally been thought. Cannot the departments, with the Minister in charge, settle 4,000 soldiers on the land? How many men have already been settled on the lands of Western Australia without any such board as this? Many thousands. I prefer to see the board wiped out altogether, leaving some Minister responsible to Parliament for the administration of this measure.

Mr. PICKERING: I said at the outset that either we should have an executive board with complete powers, or else that the board should be struck out altogether. My experience of the Lands Department has not led to that confidence in the administration of the department which has been expressed by hon. members opposite. In my early days in Western Australia, every obstacle was thrown in my way by that department. I tremble to think that returned soldiers will be placed in such a position as I myself have experienced. If the alternative to that is what is contained in the Bill, I would rather have the existing conditions. We find that the board can only recommend to the bank what assistance shall be given. I have contended that the attitude of the bank to the board should be that of a banker only and

any moneys to be expended in the interests of the returned men should be allocated specially for that purpose, and the board should have the power to draw on the bank. The Bill provides that the board can only recommend, and as the leader of the Opposition has expressed it, the bank will perhaps be quite justified in turning down the proposition. There should be a certain sum set apart on which the board could operate. I shall oppose the clause as it stands. I would prefer to vote on the lines indicated by the leader of the Opposition, namely, to do away with the board unless it is made an executive body.

Mr. MALEY: There is nothing in the clause which says that the board shall not have executive powers. Having regard to the duties imposed upon the board, they certainly appear to me to be executive. Much of the failure of land settlement in the past can be attributed to the one cause, that anybody and everybody has been allowed to go on the land and obtain an advance from the bank whether or not they had the capacity to spend the money in a proper manner. If that is going to pertain to settlement under this scheme nothing but failure must come of it. We must have a board which must rigidly examine returned soldiers whose desire it is to settle on the land. I hope that the clause as it appears in the Bill will be passed.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. PICKERING: Will the Minister explain Subclause 2, which provides that the board shall consist of four members? At the present time one representative of the board is from the Lands Department and the other from the Agricultural Bank. Is it intended to continue this representation?

The PREMIER: This can be left to the Minister. It is intended to appoint Mr. McLarty as the representative of the Agricultural Bank. Mr. Larty is still assistant general manager of the Agricultural Bank, and the reason for having him on the board is that he is in direct touch with the financial institution which controls the fund. Still, it would not be wise to confine the choice by inserting it in the Bill.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It is repeating the position in connection with the Wheat Scheme, where the board consists of two Government officials and two outside men. Here it is proposed that there shall be two departmental officers who, with two others, shall be under the control of the Minister. Mr. McLarty is required in the Agricultural Bank, and should not be messing about with this work at all.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If there are any returned soldiers present they ought to be delighted with the keen interest shown by members in the provisions of the Bill. I do not wish to reflect on hon. members when I say that their indifference to this important measure is nothing less than shocking. I am opposed to the appointment of public servants on boards. I find, from experience, that

cause of special qualifications to administer some department of State are frequently taken away from their proper work and appointed to boards, to the neglect of their allotted duties. The Minister who will be in charge of this measure can have at his elbow the advice of the Government officers, without requiring to appoint them to places on the board. I would prefer to see an independent board, and not a board largely composed of officials under the direct control of the Minister.

Mr. PICKERING: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 "four" be struck out and "five" inserted in lieu.

In my opinion the fifth member of the board should be a practical farmer.

The PREMIER: It is intended to put a practical farmer on the board.

Mr. PICKERING: Then I desire to see two practical farmers on the board. In point of fact, I am opposed to the balance of power being in the hands of Government officials.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 6—Duties of board:

Hon. P. COLLIER: I notice that the duties of the board shall be to investigate the qualifications of discharged soldiers making application for land. What qualifications is it expected the soldier settler shall possess in addition to being physically fit before he is entitled to a certificate which will entitle him to take up land? As remarked by the member for Northam, it seems to me we are hedging around the soldier settler with all sorts of restrictions that do not apply to the ordinary citizen. The soldier settler, apparently, has to go through some kind of agricultural university. I do not know whether Ministers have in contemplation the drafting of a set of regulations prescribing the qualifications which the soldier applicant must possess before a certificate issues. It may be argued that the Department is undertaking certain financial responsibility in regard to soldier settlers, but it is not doing so any more than in regard to the ordinary settler. Practical experience is of course valuable, but it is the heart and the determination to succeed that usually carry a man through. It seems to be sufficient to say that a soldier is physically fit.

The PREMIER: It is necessary that the board should ascertain that the soldier possesses those qualifications necessary to make him a discharged soldier. It is also necessary to ascertain that the soldier was resident in Australia, and why he was discharged.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Will the qualifications be further extended?

The PREMIER: As long as a man is a fit subject to go upon the land he will be allowed to get his block. It is not intended to keep these men back.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It has been done in the past.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Then all that the board will have to do is to have a look at

The Premier: The board will have to be satisfied that he is a discharged soldier. He will enjoy more privileges than will the ordinary individual.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): The board will have to find out that the man is the discharged soldier he represents himself to be.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: This seems to me to be placing a hindrance in the way of the discharged soldier. The Government apparently fear that a man may wish to go upon the land.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I move an amendment—

That in Subclause 1, paragraph (a), the words "and is physically fit" be struck out.

Hon. J. Mitchell: The board only require to be satisfied that a man is a discharged soldier.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Many of these men may not be physically fit to do hard work, but may have families who can assist them. If a man is not physically fit the board may turn him down.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): It is necessary that the words should be there. Men have not been debarred from settling on the land, and we have actually placed one-legged and one-armed men there.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Then why do you want these words in?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): It is no use a man going on the land if he is not physically fit for the work, and admits that he is not. Such a man is better off the land.

Hon. P. Collier: It all depends on what is understood by the term "Physically fit."

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): This provision is not used in a drastic way. We have to be careful for the sake of the soldiers themselves. The member for Northam seems to think that we are trying to keep the men off the land. This has not been done since I have held office.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Have any men been turned down for not being physically fit?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): Yes. A man comes along and admits his health will not let him work and the doctor says he must find some other employment. That man should be looked after by the Commonwealth under the repatriation scheme. The man may be eminently suited for some other walk in life. This is a safeguard for the men themselves.

Mr. PICKERING: Does this particular provision appertain to any Act in any other State of the Commonwealth? So far as I can see it is not in the New South Wales Act. If it is not in other Acts, why make this unnecessary provision here? At the time when the man applies he may not be physically fit, but he may become so. The life on the land may make him physically fit.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The reason I moved this amendment is owing to a statement made to me yesterday by a returned soldier. He gave me an instance of a returned man who was anxious to go on the land. He has a family. The doctor says he is not fit and he

was turned down. He is receiving 11s. a week pension, therefore he is not very bad. He went to the Pension Department, and they told him he was all right. He said, "That is what I want; then give me my certificate," but they would not do that and his case has to be re-considered. This provision may work a hardship in some cases. A man has a family which will grow up, and there are many men who are coming back who may become healthy and strong in the open air. It is advertised that certain blocks of land carry certain advances in regard to ordinary settlement; it is the block, not the man, that is considered.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. PICKERING: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of Subclause (d) the words "recommend to" be struck out and "instruct" be inserted in lieu.

A specific sum should be allocated from the amount set apart for the purpose.

Hon. P. Collier: Will the hon. member assist us to instruct the Minister when we come to a later clause?

Mr. PICKERING: I am prepared to go that far.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. MONEY: I move an amendment—

That the following be inserted to stand as Subclause (2): "The board may appoint district boards with the approval of the Minister."

I feel that it is absolutely necessary for the successful administration of the measure that there shall be district boards. These will constitute a strong inducement to returned soldiers to return to their particular districts, where they are known and their friends reside, and where their applications under the land settlement scheme will receive the most sympathetic treatment. Moreover, there would be friendly rivalry between the various district boards in what can be done for the returned men. It will be utterly impossible for any board sitting in Perth to administer the measure.

The PREMIER: All the power the hon. member desires is already provided by Subclause (2) in the clause as printed, and the amendment is unnecessary. The board may delegate their powers to any persons.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. MONEY: I move an amendment—

That in Subclause (2), line 3, after the word "Minister," there be inserted "or a district board."

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member has moved that amendment already, and it has been negatived.

Mr. MONEY: This is delegation. The Premier says the power to delegate is already in the Bill. I want it put clearly.

The CHAIRMAN: This is practically the same amendment as has just been negatived. I rule this amendment out of order.

Clause as previously amended put and passed. Progress reported.

#### BILL—INTERPRETATION.

Returned from the Legislative Council, with amendments.

House adjourned at 11.20 p.m.