

Clause put and negatived.

New Clause :

Mr. PILKINGTON : I move—

That the following be added as a new clause :—

“Section 9 of the principal Act is hereby repealed.”

This, if carried, will leave it open to holders of certificates to deal with them in the same way as with any other property.

The Minister for Mines : Are not these certificates negotiable in the Eastern States ?

Hon. W. C. Angwin : Yes ; and the farmers there are taken down hand over fist.

Mr. PILKINGTON : I understand the Government are agreeable to this.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL : The member for Perth is quite right. Some three or four months ago, whilst the Premier was in Melbourne, I myself received a deputation from, I think, farmers and the Chambers of Commerce which raised several points connected with the wheat scheme, including this one of the negotiability of wheat certificates. The deputation contended that persons should be left free to deal with these certificates where they themselves were free. In many cases, of course, wheat certificates are pledged to the I.A.B. or to bankers. In this State the larger number of farmers are protected by the Industries Assistance Board and the certificates cannot be dealt with.

Mr. HOLMAN : A man may have certificates and they are practically lying idle and he is paying interest in nearly every case. The opportunity should be given of negotiating those certificates wherever it is desired to do so.

Mr. WILLCOCK : It has been suggested that the publication during the past three or four weeks of alarmist telegrams with reference to the selling of wheat in England at 4s. and 4s. 6d. a bushel has been done for sharebroking purposes. The telegrams of course were bogus and were published with the object of scaring holders of certificates and causing them to sell so that others might buy them at below their value. The people who deal in these certificates are shrewd business men who make a profit on such transactions. I would prefer not to allow these certificates to be dealt with.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN : Mr. Keys, in giving evidence before the Royal Commission, was asked several questions in connection with the negotiation of certificates. He said—

Speaking from memory we have given permission in only two instances to negotiate certificates. I cannot say off hand how many applicants have been refused. Heavy trading in certificates has taken place in the Eastern States and I personally know of a number of individuals who have made large sums of money by speculating in wheat certificates.

Then he went on to quote instances showing how the farmers lose large sums of money by speculating in certificates. The clause was therefore embodied in the measure for the protection of the farmer in the country who cannot get information as can the person in town. If it is necessary for him to sell he applies to the Minister for advice. The Minister will point out the actual value of the certificates and in that way perhaps save the farmer from loss. The clause will prevent speculation in certificates and it will prevent the sale of them at a rate lower than their actual value.

Mr. DRAPER : The British law forbids property from being tied up. When the Wheat Marketing Act was passed originally there might have been

good ground for preventing farmers from assigning their certificates without the consent of the Minister. Those grounds were that we were in the midst of a war, that it was owing to difficulty of transport to foreign markets, and that, owing to the then financial conditions, it was possible that anyone with command of money would be able to purchase wheat cheaply and speculate to his own advantage. Now we have reasonable grounds for believing that the war is over. In regard to next year's harvest, war conditions will have ceased, transport will be available, and there will be less reason for speculation in wheat in Australia. In those circumstances, are we justified in maintaining a provision which was of an emergency character, and which interferes with ordinary business operations, when the reasons for that provision have disappeared ?

Mr. MALEY : I have no objection to the farmers negotiating their certificates. The argument based on false reports in the newspaper is equally applicable to many other lines of commerce.

New clause put and passed.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 4.36 a.m. (Saturday).

## Legislative Council,

Monday, 16th December, 1918.

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 3 p.m., and read prayers.

### SITTING HOURS.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [3.5] : I desire to intimate to hon. members that it is my intention, at the end of to-day's proceedings, to move that the House at its rising adjourn to 3 o'clock to-morrow afternoon instead of the usual meeting time of 4.30.

### URGENCY MOTION—PNEUMONIC INFLUENZA, QUARANTINING CONTACTS.

Hon. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [3.5] : In accordance with Standing Order 58, I desire to submit a motion relating to a matter of urgency.

The PRESIDENT : I have received a copy of the motion the hon. member desires to move and if the requisite number of members stand up in their places, it may be proceeded with.

Four members having risen in their places,

Hon. J. DUFFELL : I move—

That the Council at its rising, adjourn till 3 p.m. to-morrow (Tuesday) for the

purpose of drawing attention to the position of the returned soldiers now in quarantine at Woodman's Point, and to submit the following resolution in connection therewith:—That this House is of opinion that the regulations made by the Federal Government for the quarantining of contacts on the transports now in port are likely to prove inefficient and a great source of danger to the inhabitants of this State, and that under these circumstances, the regulations should be modified by making provision for the internment of all contact cases at Rottnest, and that arrangements to this effect should forthwith be made by the Minister for Defence with the Government of this State, and that a copy of this resolution be forwarded by wire, by the President, to the Minister for Defence.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN (West) [3.7]: I am in accord with the motion, but I think that the hon. member instead of definitely stating Rottnest Island, should have added "or Garden Island." There are certain difficulties in the way of utilising Rottnest Island. These difficulties have been pointed out in the Press by the Colonial Secretary, and when a motion like the one which has been moved comes before Parliament, it is only right that the objections, if any, which obtain in regard to Rottnest, should be known by the public. At Rottnest Island we have a small population employed in connection with the signal station and the lighthouses, services which must be maintained in the interests of the port of Fremantle and the safe navigation of the coast of Western Australia.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: How many people are there?

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: About 40 connected with the services I have mentioned, and those people have to be in constant communication with the main land. Provisions have to be taken to them from time to time and they naturally get into contact with the people from the coast. In view of those facts, it will prove a very difficult proposition to take the contacts to Rottnest. There are also many other people at Rottnest who would have to be removed. The Rottnest Island Board have no objection, individually or as a board, and the Government themselves have no objection to the island being used for quarantine purposes, but the difficulties which exist point conclusively to the fact that Garden Island is a much more suitable locality whereon to place contacts. There is no doubt about it that great laxity has been shown by the Federal authorities in not making preparation for accommodating contacts long before this. Everyone knew that vessels from overseas would call at Fremantle and that there was a danger of the disease being brought to our shores. Garden Island has been reported on as a suitable place for a quarantine station, and it has also been stated that very little expense and trouble would have been involved in making it suitable for the accommodation of contacts, yet nothing has been done. While we are not raising any objection from any point of view other than that of utility to Rottnest Island being used, we think that Garden Island should have been prepared as a quarantine

station. There is another difficulty connected with the use of Rottnest Island. That island is situated some 20 miles from the present quarantine station, while Garden Island is only three miles away from it. At any season of the year boats of small capacity can travel between the quarantine station and Garden Island and there would be no difficulty in removing those who develop the disease from Garden Island to the quarantine station, whereas there would be almost insuperable difficulty connected with their removal to Rottnest. It happens at certain seasons of the year that vessels can neither approach nor leave Rottnest Island. I intend to support the motion but I would suggest that Garden Island should also be referred to.

The PRESIDENT: Does the hon. member intend to move an amendment?

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: I will move an amendment to that effect.

The Colonial Secretary: You will include "Albany" as well.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: I am willing to include the words "Garden Island or Albany" after the word "Rottnest."

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan) [3.10]: Before any further action is taken in this matter, I think that the two motions which are contained in the matter which has been submitted by Mr. Duffell should be put into shape. One motion is that the House at its rising should adjourn until 3 o'clock to-morrow afternoon and with that is bound up a motion concerning the quarantine conditions. It must be obvious that if we carry the first motion, the second is bound to be that the House adjourn.

Hon. J. Duffell: At its rising.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: Even so the two things are quite apart. The hon. member should, at the end of the debate, withdraw his motion for the adjournment of the House. That is the course that is always followed after the question of urgency has been discussed. I do not think that we can consider the two matters together. The motion for adjournment is submitted in order that a question may be debated. The hon. member has a concrete motion before the House which he wants carried, but we cannot carry it in the manner in which the two motions have been submitted. I am quite in accord with the object the hon. member has in view, but his end would be gained by submitting the matter in the form of a motion without notice by leave of the House. There is no need for a motion for adjournment.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [3.10]: I was not aware until I arrived at the House this afternoon that it was the hon. member's intention to bring this matter forward, and I was going to make a suggestion on the lines of that proposed by Mr. Kingsmill. Mr. Duffell might withdraw the motion as he has presented it and submit another motion without notice and the House can debate it and agree to it.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN (South) [3.13]: This motion if telegraphed to the Federal Government in its present form, would bring forward a reply somewhat different from what

we might expect, because it is a general condemnation of certain regulations made by the Federal Government for the quarantining of contacts. I thought that Mr. Duffell would explain to us what the principal regulations were to which we as a Chamber might object, and I was very much surprised when, after reading his motion, which is one of a very drastic nature, the hon. member resumed his seat. It is necessary that the House should be possessed of all the information that is available before we carry the motion. I would suggest that the hon. member explain to us the particular regulation to which he objects, and to give us some information in support of the motion.

Hon. A. SANDERSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [3.14]: I would like to endorse the remarks made by Mr. Kirwan and also to ask whether the Government suggested the motion.

The Colonial Secretary: I never heard of it until I came into the Chamber.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: That is very much to be regretted because we ought to agree on the subject, and if we can strengthen the hands of the Government in any way, we ought to do so. It is entirely a matter for the State Government in negotiation with the Federal Government to bring about something practical. I hope the leader of the House will find a way by which the Government can accept the motion, but as it is before us, it is difficult to know the best way in which to approach it. Personally, not knowing any of the facts of the case—and the Government are the only people who can know—I should hesitate to commit myself to a motion of this nature unless I got an assurance from the Government that they welcomed it in order to strengthen their hands to deal with a question of great urgency. I only make that suggestion, and I hope my colleague will accept it in the spirit in which it is given. I trust the Chamber will unanimously support the Government in their difficult negotiations with the Federal authorities.

Hon. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [3.15]: My motion is the outcome of remarks by the Colonial Secretary in this morning's newspaper, giving reasons why Rottneest was not selected. For the reasons stated by Mr. Kirwan, I deemed it necessary to give notice of motion so as to be able to get the required regulations and furnish members with the information when my motion should come forward to-morrow. Further, my intention was to give members an opportunity of securing information for themselves.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: But if it is so urgent, why not move it now?

Hon. J. DUFFELL: Because I am not prepared with the information asked for by the hon. member. It is certainly a matter of urgency, affecting as it does the health of the community, and I deemed it necessary that I should have the fullest information to give to the House. I regret exceedingly that quibbles have arisen regarding the points raised by Mr. Kirwan and Mr. Sanderson.

Hon. A. Sanderson: There has been nothing said about any point raised by me.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I do not wish that the House should rise immediately, but merely that at the conclusion of the business my motion should come on. My only object was to facilitate the Government by calling the House together at 3 o'clock instead of 4.30 p.m., so that the greater part of the sitting after that hour might not be taken up in a discussion of the motion. I hope hon. members will be patient and enable me to get the information I require to place before them. As for Mr. Allen's amendment, I claim that we have facilities already existing at Rottneest. Why should the pleasure of a few people who have made up their minds to go there be considered, when a matter of such vital importance to the community is awaiting settlement? There is no reason why we should not avail ourselves of that island, which is the most convenient and best prepared for dealing with this matter. On the other hand, if Garden Island is to be taken into consideration it becomes a question of water supply and facilities generally. It would take a much longer time to prepare that island for the contacts than it would take to send them to Rottneest. I trust that the motion will be carried and that hon. members will see eye to eye with me and help to avert a catastrophe.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colclatch—East) [3.20]: I regret very much that he hon. member has not seen his way to fall in with the suggestion made.

Hon. J. Duffell: I will do that if it is the wish of the House.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The attitude he has taken up is a most extraordinary one. Either this is a matter of urgency, which justifies us in considering it at once, or else it is not a matter of urgency, and can be dealt with on notice of motion to-morrow. My own opinion is that it is a matter of urgency the latter part of his motion, but put with it now, it will be futile to debate it to-morrow. It is also a fact that a great deal of harm may result from a long debate and discussion on all the facts, while a great deal of good may be done if the hon. member will follow the suggestion thrown out, withdraw this motion and then submit as a motion of urgency the latter part of his motion, but put in a form which will be unobjectionable to the Federal authorities. It might then have the effect of strengthening the hands of the Government. But as the motion stands it seems to be entirely mistaken. In the first instance it is quite out of place to comment on the regulations made by the Federal Government, because I doubt very much whether this is a matter affected by the regulations made by the Federal Government. In another part of his motion the hon. member makes an appeal to the Minister for Defence. This is not a matter having to do with the Minister for Defence, but is a quarantine matter. Therefore, if the motion were carried, it could not possibly lead to any good, and we might be told that we were exhibiting a great deal of ignorance as to the proper methods of carrying out these things. Then as to the rival

merits of alternative places to take these contacts to, I can see no good likely to result from a discussion of such merits. The naval authorities and the military authorities have all the details in their possession, and so are more competent to arrive at a wise decision than are the members of this House. There is no occasion for the House to discuss a question of that kind. Still I should be grateful if the House were to carry a resolution which would strengthen our hands in this matter. My personal feelings on this question are very strong, and I realise that no good, but possibly a great deal of harm, would result if at the present time I were to say exactly what I think. I was very guarded in the remarks I made for publication in the Press to-day, notwithstanding which I think those remarks fill the position. I should certainly feel gratified if the hon. member would withdraw his motion and then submit another motion, which I think the House will at once carry, after this form—

That in the opinion of this House the quarantining of contacts on the transports now in port at Fremantle and at Woodman's Point is unfair to those contacts and likely to prove ineffective and a great source of danger to the people of the State; and that in those circumstances immediate provision be made for the internment of all cases and contacts at Rottnest, Garden Island and Albany; and that a copy of the resolution be forwarded by the President to the Minister for Defence.

My reason for mentioning the other places is that it is quite within the bounds of possibility that two of even three of those places may be found necessary if the work is to be properly carried out. If the hon. member insists upon his motion in its present form, I may be compelled to oppose it, because no good can come from a discussion of the subject to-morrow. On the other hand, if the hon. member will withdraw his motion and submit a motion on the lines of that which I have suggested, I will support it.

Hon. J. Duffell: I ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

The PRESIDENT: I will leave the Chair for five minutes while the new motion is being drawn up.

Sitting suspended from 3.25 to 3.35 p.m.

Hon. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [3.35]: The motion has now been amended. I move—

That in the opinion of this House, the quarantining of contacts on the transports now in port at Fremantle and at Woodman's Point is unfair to the contacts and is likely to prove ineffective, and a great source of danger to the people of this State; that in these circumstances, the Commonwealth authorities be urged to make immediate provision for the internment of all contact cases at Rottnest, Garden Island, or Albany quarantine station; that a copy of this resolution be forwarded by wire, by the President, to the Acting Prime Minister.

The motion speaks for itself, and will doubtless commend itself to hon. members.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN (West) [3.36]: I second the motion.

Question put and passed.

## BILL—STATE CHILDREN ACT AMENDMENT.

Order postponed.

Order of the Day for third reading read.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [3.38]: I understand that an error has occurred in the printing of this Bill.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Several errors have occurred.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move—

That the third reading be made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

Question put and passed.

## BILL—INCOME TAX.

Read a third time and passed.

## BILL—FRUIT CASES.

Second Reading—Order discharged.

Debate resumed from the 27th November.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister—East—in reply) [4.42]: Some hon. members have spoken strongly in opposition to this Bill, and whilst they may have some ground for objection in regard to certain clauses, I cannot understand why any hon. member should move for the rejection of the measure on the second reading. It has also been said that no further Government interference in the fruit industry is needed. I would point out that, had not the Government interfered in this matter, the fruit industry would have been of very little value to the State to-day. This interference has prevented many devastations of orchards by pests and disease. To-day Western Australia is far in advance of the other States of the Commonwealth in the matter of freedom from pests and fruit diseases. Another objection to the Bill was that it would not come into operation until 1920, and that, therefore, it was not required. No matter when such a measure is brought in, ample time will have to be given for those holding supplies of sawn timber for the making of cases, in order that they may dispose of those supplies.

Hon. J. Duffell: They will take the hint.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): I hope so. It is very necessary to have a Bill that will give some uniformity in the matter of cases and the marking of cases, as well as provide for control in such matters. The Bill has been brought forward at the urgent request of the Fruitgrowers' Association of the State, who have made repeated applications to past Governments with the same object in view. It cannot be said that the Fruitgrowers' Association do not fairly represent the fruit-

growers of the State, because they do. In addition, that organisation has done useful work in connection with the industry and deserves to be commended. Any request coming from the Associated Fruitgrowers, a body of men in which the Government have reason to have some confidence, is entitled to every consideration at the hands of the Government. I move—

That the Order of the Day be discharged from the Notice Paper.

Motion put and passed; the Order discharged.

#### BILL—DIVIDEND DUTIES ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 13th December; Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair, the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 3—Interest on Western Australian stocks:

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The leader of the House was very frank in his statement last week, and allowed us to report progress in order that this clause might be looked into. I think we ought to have some explanation of it, unless hon. members consider that in view of the many matters we have to get through we should pass questions without discussion. The clause states that interest on Western Australian Government debentures shall be exempt from duty under this measure. That is curious, because the Income Tax Act of 1902 states that such interest shall be exempt. Probably some difficulty has arisen with regard to dividend duty. If that is so, how is it that since 1902 this amendment has not been thought necessary? If, on the other hand, there is some reference here to the large sums of money paid over by the insurance companies to the Government, I hope the leader of the House will give us some information on the point.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I thought I had been clear in my explanation of this clause. It has nothing whatever to do with the amount of money handed over to the Government by the insurance companies. The reason for the necessity of the clause now I also explained when moving the second reading. Prior to last year these insurance companies, chiefly life assurance companies, which had invested in Western Australian stocks were taxed under the Land and Income Tax Act. That Act specifically excluded such investments from taxation, and the bonds themselves were issued on the understanding that they should be free from taxation. Last year the life assurance companies were taken out of the Land and Income Tax Act, and transferred to the Dividend Duties Act; and now the contention has been set up by the Commissioner of Taxation that under the Dividend Duties Act these companies are not exempt from taxation of their investments in Western Australian securities. It is an arguable point: some contend one way, and some another.

The Commissioner, of course, recognises that it was always the intention that these investments should be exempt. The clause under discussion is included in the Bill merely in order to remove any doubt on the point.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4—agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

#### BILL—DISCHARGED SOLDIERS' SETTLEMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 13th December.

Hon. J. EWING (South-West) [4.51]: The Colonial Secretary, in introducing this Bill, stated that it was beyond comparison the most important Bill that had been introduced this session, and that he regretted very much the Bill had come before us at so late a stage of the session, when we could have very little opportunity to discuss its very important proposals. With these remarks I fully agree; at the same time, I desire to congratulate the hon. gentleman on the amount of work and detail, and on the high enthusiasm, with which he has introduced the measure. I am pleased that there is at any rate one member of the Government who is fully alive to the importance of the repatriation question, and I only wish the leader of this House could imbue his colleagues with some of his enthusiasm, so that we could get something of a real and tangible nature done. It is well known that in America, and more especially in Canada, since a year or two of the outbreak of hostilities, very considerable preparations have been made for the settlement of soldiers on the land. The matter has been very carefully considered, and it is surrounded by such conditions as make it necessary that the soldier shall consider the project, and if he does consider it and settles on the land under those conditions he is assured of success. We have been told by the Colonial Secretary that the percentage of our returned soldiers who have gone on the land, or applied to go on the land, or made inquiry respecting land settlement, is very large indeed as compared with the corresponding percentages in the Eastern States. That may be so: figures can be made to prove anything. But the Eastern States in some instances as much as three years ago passed Acts of the nature of the Bill which we are considering to-day; and in this connection large sums of money have already been spent in the Eastern States and New Zealand in the settlement of soldiers on the land. Victoria, for example, has spent something like £500,000 in repurchasing estates for soldier settlement. Of course, the other Eastern States, having large areas of Crown lands available, have not had so much occasion as Victoria has had to repurchase. At this late hour we in Western Australia are only considering what the Government are prepared to do; and, bearing in mind what

has actually been done in the Eastern States, we must acknowledge that we are very much behind in the march of progress. I am quite aware that the figures quoted by the Colonial Secretary are somewhat against me, but the enthusiasm and determination necessary in the matter of repatriation have not been so evident in Western Australia as they ought to have been. One question which seems to be exercising the minds of hon. members very considerably is that although this Bill makes very liberal conditions for the settlement of the returned soldier on the land, full consideration has not been given either by this State or by the Commonwealth to the case of the returned soldier who either cannot or does not wish to take up agricultural or pastoral pursuits, but wishes to follow some other avocation. The Minister quoted some very important figures, which appealed to me, and appealed to me in a manner suggesting a solution of the whole difficulty. He has told us that throughout the war the taxation on the people of the Commonwealth, some 4,500,000 or perhaps 5,000,000, has been at the rate of 30s. per month per head of the population. Those are stupendous figures, and they mean that the people of the Commonwealth have been paying for the war to the extent of 70 or 80 millions sterling per annum. If the Australian people can find that astonishing amount of money—astonishing because one would hardly have thought there was so much wealth here—for the work of destruction, surely they can provide an equal amount for the repatriation of our soldiers and the opening up of important Australian industries. What has suggested itself to me is this: During the next twelve months the full amount will have to be found by the Commonwealth for demobilisation purposes; or possibly demobilisation may extend over a period of 18 months. I trust it will be all over in less than 12 months, and I hope we shall have our soldiers back again within that space of time. But surely for the next five years we can tax the people of the Commonwealth at the rate of 40 millions per annum for the purpose of settling soldiers on the land and helping those who have fought so bravely for us during the war. In that case this State of Western Australia will have three millions to expend in that direction for the next five years. The whole of the people of the Commonwealth will have to find that money, and I agree with the suggestion of Mr. Dodd and Mr. Sanderson that this money should be furnished free of interest to Western Australia and to all the other States of the Commonwealth in order that they may carry out the very important work of repatriation. It is a perfectly reasonable and proper suggestion that we shall not be faced with the payment of interest during the first five years. The money could be used for the settlement of our soldiers on the land, and for giving them even better conditions than those proposed under this Bill. Western Australia could also afford to supply from her own loan expenditure a million per annum, which would enable us to open up industries and thus find employment for the soldiers apart from land settlement. We now have the soldiers walk-

ing about the streets of Perth—400 of them are doing so to-day; and they represent a very pressing difficulty, which must be overcome. If this scheme is carried out, the result at the end of five years will, I am sure, be a thoroughly satisfactory one. By that time those soldiers who had settled upon our lands and those others who had to become the owners of small businesses, would be able to pay back their advances with interest to the Commonwealth. That proposition would overcome the difficulty, as suggested by Mr. Dodd and Mr. Sanderson. Even if the money is granted free of interest, it will not be granted free to Western Australia alone, but to all the States of the Commonwealth.

Hon. J. E. DODD: The Commonwealth would give us only what is our due. We have sent away many more soldiers, proportionately, than have the other States.

Hon. J. EWING: I agree that it would be our due. Mr. Sanderson suggested that in the event of the Commonwealth taking over the whole of the repatriation work, including land settlement, they would naturally take control of the State. But that does not follow. The Commonwealth could lend us the money free of interest, thereby enabling us to settle the soldiers as we best know how to do it. The question of the land settlement of soldiers has been before the country for at least two years very prominently. I consider that it was the determined criticism and the strong desire of the outside public, as well as of many members of both Houses of Parliament, that brought the Government up to the scratch with a declaration of what they intended to do. Before that, there seemed to be no determination to do what is right in this direction. As mentioned by Mr. Stewart, twelve months ago Mr. Willmott brought Mr. Camm from Bridgetown to Perth and appointed him to direct repatriation in the matter of land settlement. What happened? During the six or seven months Mr. Camm held the position he had no power to do anything; and nothing was done. Mr. Camm finds himself in a very invidious position to-day. He is not even connected with the Repatriation Department now, although it has been stated by the Minister on several occasions that Mr. Camm is so connected. Mr. Camm is now simply an ordinary surveyor, who goes out to classify country; but as regards the land settlement of our soldiers the advice he might well give, being a very excellent man, is no longer at the disposal of the Repatriation Department. In making these remarks I am taking no exception to the appointment of Mr. Macartney, who also is a very excellent man. However, I do not think Mr. Camm has received the treatment which he should have received. At the present moment we have work going on which should have been taken in hand three years ago—that is, the classification of our lands. It is well known that when our men went to the war the general desire was to have as many as possible of them on their return settled on the land. The classification of our lands should, therefore, have been taken in hand three or four years ago. It is in process now, and we are obtaining information which should have been available at least two years

ago. I know perfectly well that it is a good thing that the work should be going on now, but I maintain that in this State, from the very inception of this great question, those in power have not realised its importance. Otherwise, we should not be in the position we find ourselves in to-day. I was very much impressed by the statement made by Mr. Stewart with regard to the Yandanooka estate, when he said that out of 40 or 50 settlers who could be settled there, only eight had been able to get land, while over 200 men who wished to take up land had not been able to do so. That position seems to be strengthened by what we read in to-day's "West Australian." We have only to read those figures to find that although 150 men are desirous of going on the land in this State, there is no land ready for them.

Hon. H. Stewart: They have been passed by the Qualification Board.

Hon. J. EWING: They should be found land to enable them to make a commencement in the direction of earning their living. The position as we find it should not obtain for one moment. It has been brought about to a great extent by negligence not only on the part of the present Government, but on the part of previous Governments who did not get the land ready. I have been very much impressed and disappointed also at the tone of the debate not only in this House, but the other House as well. The most enthusiastic speaker from the point of view of land settlement was the leader of this House. He has been more optimistic in regard to the possibilities of successfully settling the returned soldier on the land than anyone else. It is unique to find him so enthusiastic after what we have heard from the Premier and the Honorary Minister (Mr. Willmott) on the subject of the settlement of our soldiers. During the past two years, on every occasion when this very important subject has come up, both those gentlemen have stated that they did not think many soldiers would be desirous of taking up land on their return. The Premier, by way of interjection when this Bill was before another place, stated he did not think the measure was necessary. If hon. members refer to "Hansard," they will see that what I have stated is correct. Why then, may I ask, are we wasting time in discussing the Bill? We want those in power at the present time to realise the position, but it seems that they are not prepared to say to the returned soldier, "We urge you to go on the land." If they are not prepared to do that, they have no right to submit for the consideration of Parliament a Bill of this magnitude. If they do not believe in land settlement, they have no right to attempt to pass legislation to deal with it. There has been a pessimistic strain pervading this debate which has been a great disappointment to me. Many hon. members do not appear to realise the possibilities which lie before us in connection with land settlement. We must have courage and faith in our State. Some 15 members, including the leader of the House, have already spoken on the second reading of the Bill. Mr. Kingsmill, Mr. Lynn, and Mr. Holmes have said that we do not want to

push men on the land, and that this Bill is likely to have that effect. If that is the position those hon. members are taking up, they surely cannot have much faith in land settlement in Western Australia. I do not look at the position in that way, and I hope before I am finished to be able to convince hon. members that they should be careful in their utterances, otherwise they will do incalculable harm to land settlement. Sir Edward Wittenoom, Mr. Cornell and others would have us believe that not more than 10 per cent. of the returned soldiers will settle on the land. Even those figures will give us 3,000 settlers, and we can rest assured that that number will find work for many other returned men. We might easily multiply the 3,000 by three or perhaps four and get quite a good total. Even that estimate of the number of soldiers who will settle on the land, which is agreed to by the Government and hon. members, is a guarantee that success will follow the settlement of our returned soldiers on the land. But unfortunately, there is no real optimism with regard to land settlement. We must have optimism. If we are not going to fail, let us tell those who desire to go on the land that we will provide them with a good home and a certain income. Mr. Sanderson and Mr. Dodd touched on important matters with regard to the Federal Government and their responsibilities. But I would urge the State Government to go right ahead and endeavour to make arrangements on the lines that I have laid down, which lines I am convinced will become popular throughout Australia. Those of us who have stayed behind, must and shall find the money which is necessary for the repatriation of our men and also for the development of industries so that we may find employment for all. I sincerely regret the utterances of Mr. Greig, because that hon. member is a prominent man in the community of this State; he is a farmer, and one of the leaders of the Country party. If he believes everything that he has told us and would have us believe, it is a wonder that he does not get out of farming altogether.

Hon. J. A. Greig: All the more reason why I should stay.

Hon. J. EWING: I hope the hon. member will. The hon. member told us the farmers were being ruined and that there was no hope for them under the present conditions. He also stated that he would not recommend any man to go on the land under existing conditions. If that is the attitude to be taken up by prominent public men in Western Australia, and especially those connected with the industry, it will make the position serious indeed. The hon. member surely does not mean what he said. He has been most pessimistic and conservative in his views. I want him to be a more useful member of the community and to do something in the direction of helping to settle soldiers on the land. It seems to me that the hon. member representing as he does a wheat district, is obsessed with the wheat question.

Hon. J. A. Greig: Not at all.

Hon. J. EWING: He thoroughly understands that question, and we cannot get away from the fact that the position in connection with the cultivation of wheat has been somewhat serious during the past four years. Happily, the conditions of the past are disappearing and wheat will be sent away to the markets of the world and the grower will be encouraged to produce. I would urge that the members of the Country party should direct their influence towards getting those engaged in the wheat industry to go in for sheep raising as well. Then when we have freezing works at Fremantle and elsewhere, we must have the success following mixed farming. Those are the lines upon which the hon. member should encourage those people who he says are to-day experiencing difficulties. He also states that it is absolutely necessary that markets should be found. That is one of the most important questions which should receive our earnest consideration. The Government should act at once in that matter. So far as the fruit industry is concerned, we have a glut, and the producers are suffering considerably on account of that glut, and no doubt they will suffer for the next year or two. We have in Java and in India, however, splendid markets for our fruit. Why do not the Government send a responsible officer to open up those markets? In that way the difficulty in which we find ourselves could very quickly be relieved. So far as the settlement of soldiers on the land is concerned, I do not think we should send them to the wheat areas. The place for them is the South-West, where there is a fine climate, a good rainfall, and excellent soil. Since the very early days of settlement, very little, if anything, has been done in the South-West. The Agricultural Bank has always been against advancing money for settlers in the South-West. That bank, however, has advanced many thousands of pounds to the wheat producers, but to my knowledge it has been a most difficult matter to get a penny for the most important part of the State, the South-West. That is the territory where we are going to have success from the settlement of returned soldiers. Just let us remember what we can produce there. I have a list before me of the produce which we import into Western Australia, and which with very little encouragement could all be grown in the South-West. The value of that imported produce is no less than £900,000 per annum—practically a million sterling, and that sum we might say is being sent out of the State for that which we can grow in the South-West. Those are the figures for the year ended 30th June last. Mr. Greig need not worry about a market for those who settle in the South-West. The market is here, and when that market is supplied, if the Government act judiciously, they will open up markets all over the world.

Hon. J. A. Greig: The only drawback is that it costs 25s. to produce £1 worth.

Hon. J. EWING: I hope not. That recalls to my mind the great bugbear, the tariff on machinery, and so on. There is no doubt

that the tariff has done considerable harm to the farmer.

Hon. J. E. Dodd: Not only to the farmer, but to mining as well.

Hon. J. EWING: I am particularly concerned about the farmer. I agree with what Mr. Greig said about the tariff, but I would ask him whether he would stop farming altogether because it requires a sum of about £300 to equip a farm with machinery? The tax may be an unjust one, but it surely should not prevent a man from making a success of farming. I am with the hon. member in his advocacy of a free-trade policy. At the same time, I would not dare stand in my place in the House or on the public platform and advance the argument that because a man has to pay £300 for his machinery for an up-to-date farm, that is a reason why soldiers or others should not settle on the land. One important matter which the Government must take notice of is that hon. members in responsible positions are going to tell the people not to settle upon the land if there is no possible chance of making a living out of it, and certainly they will not settle on the land if they listened to Mr. Greig. At the same time, we find that the Agent General in London is advertising land settlement in Western Australia as affording golden opportunities of making a good livelihood. This is in direct opposition to the views expressed by the hon. member. What is the position? If what Mr. Greig says is true, the Agent General has no right to try to induce people from the Old Country to go to Western Australia. We cannot alter the Federal laws in five minutes nor shall we be able to do so for the next five years. For that reason, are we to alter our policy of land settlement, and are the Government going to allow statements made by public men to the effect that it is not possible to settle returned soldiers on the land under present conditions to remain uncontradicted?

Hon. J. A. Greig: Not if 900 men left their farms.

Hon. J. EWING: I know that many of those farms have been taken up again. If the hon. member honestly thinks it is impossible for a man to make a living on the land in Western Australia and that the returned soldiers should certainly not go on the land, let him take that responsibility. I will not be with him. I am satisfied that under the liberal conditions which we are offering, returned soldiers will meet with considerable success.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): There is no better prospect for the returned soldier.

Hon. J. EWING: I am pleased to hear the Minister say so. It is in direct contradiction to what has been said by Mr. Greig, and I hope that hon. members will review his remarks. He must realise that he is in a responsible position. The "West Australian" does not think much of the debates in this House, for it seldom reports them; and perhaps it is a good thing that the remarks made by the hon. member the other night



were not reported in the Press. I entirely agree with Mr. Dodd in what he has said regarding the Minister and the board. Under the Bill the Minister is to be the Minister for Lands or some other responsible Minister appointed by the Government. This question of the settlement of soldiers is quite sufficient for any one Minister to undertake. At present it is in the hands of the Premier, who is also Minister for Lands, and Minister for Agriculture. The Premier, with his multifarious duties, has but little time for departmental work. I urge that one Minister alone should look after the repatriation work and should not be asked to do anything else. What should be the duties of the Minister? Is it a fact that he goes amongst the returned soldiers and mixes with those who desire to settle on the land, placing his views before them and urging them to come along and get a block of land, and be happy for the rest of their lives? We do not find the Minister doing this class of work at all. He ought not to sit in his office waiting for applicants, but should go out among the soldiers and, further, should go and inspect the land, should be in all respects a practical man. We are faced with a very serious problem. On the subject of repurchased estates, the Government should see that they do not pay too much for the land. I am placing on the Notice Paper amendments in regard to the board. As at present proposed, it is to be merely a board of recommendation. It is distinctly useless to have a board of that sort. I have repeatedly criticised the Government on the dual control in regard to land settlement. That dual control still exists. A certain man in my electorate desired to sell a block of land to the Government. He got a reply from the Under Secretary of Lands, stating that the proposition had been definitely turned down by the Government. Two days later he received a reply from the Honorary Minister for Lands stating that the matter was under consideration. What sort of a policy is that? The man does not know where he is. I propose to amend Clause 4 by making the board a responsible one. It should be the best board we can get, even if we have to take Mr. Paterson—who is said to be the best man for the purpose in Western Australia—from the Agricultural Bank and put him on the board. The board should have the final decision in all questions coming before it. If my amendments are carried, we shall have a board worth while. To-day an applicant for land is driven from pillar to post, and can get no finality. That should be stopped. In Committee I will make an endeavour to amend the provision in this direction. In regard to the concession to be made to the soldier by letting him have his land at half price, I was impressed by what Mr. Greig said when he showed that in the end the soldier would be paying equivalent to the full value. I hope to so extend the concession that those who had no land when they enlisted shall enjoy the full conditions offered to those who were on the land prior to going to the war. Eighteen months ago I moved in the House a motion, which was carried by 12 to nine, to

the effect that the returned soldiers should get their land absolutely free of all charges for 12 months. The resolution went to another place, where, however, it became out of order because the Minister could not see his way to take it up. I am going to move in that direction again. I am prepared to have the leader of the House tell me that it is against the finding of the conference of State Premiers, which was to the effect that the conditions should be uniform in all the States. However, one has only to peruse the Tasmanian Act to see how different are the conditions obtaining in that State. If it can be done in Tasmania, it can be done here. I know that the existing conditions are liberal, but I want to make them even more liberal. All hon. members agree that we cannot do too much for the returned soldier. I will test the feeling of the House to see if hon. members are prepared to give the returned soldiers on the land that land, fully equipped and ready to produce, for five years free from all charges. I will agree to a provision for the most strict investigation and careful scrutiny of what is done during that period, and will agree also that any man not showing a desire to make good shall give place to someone else. To give the soldiers the land free of all charges for five years, is the least we can do. The State has a dual interest in this policy. If we can get the men on the land producing, it will be found that we have the wealth within our own boundaries and will soon overtake all our debts. It is provided in Clause 15 that  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. shall be charged on moneys advanced to the returned soldier. I want to wipe that right out and give them their land free of all charges for the first five years. Then, at the end of five years, we shall have a successful yeomanry able to take up their proper burdens, while all that the people of the State will have to face will be the expenses for the first five years. I do not think the House will stultify itself by refusing to accept this proposition, because it is perfectly fair and just, and virtually it has been already agreed to by the House. Mr. Lynn said the other day that he had met one returned soldier who was going to the Brunswick State farm as a trainee. I wonder if it is true that there be only one. I have been to the Brunswick State farm frequently, and I have heard the manager express a desire to take a large number of those men. I hope the Government recognise the position and that there will be no delay in starting those training schools. I trust it is not true that there is only one man who wants to go down there, and I hope that use will be made of the farm to train large numbers of men to go on the land.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): There are no applicants ready to go there yet.

Hon. J. FWING: We do not want the Government to wait for applicants, but to go along and induce the men to apply. The Government do not do these things. If the Minister would take the trouble to go amongst the returned soldiers, and invite them to go down to the Brunswick State farm for six months under ideal conditions for the purpose of see-

ing whether they like the work, it would be of great advantage, not only to the men, but to the State. That is the sort of policy we want. We do not want to wait till people come to us. We require to go to them. If the Government would but take up a policy of this kind, they would be surprised at the success achieved. I regret very much that the leader of this House is not in charge of this important question, for I am sure that if he were he would make it his first duty to go among the men and induce them to take up land. It may be that he does not know the technical side of land settlement, but I am quite sure it would not take him long to overcome that difficulty. In regard to repurchased estates, we find greater obstacles than are met with in ordinary land settlement, because large sums of money have been expended on those estates and, of course, we have to find the interest on that money. Under the Bill provision is made that repayments of the capital shall not start for five years, but that interest has to be paid on the money advanced. If the question is carefully considered in Committee, we ought to be able to give to the people settled on repurchased estates the same conditions as are offered to those who go on Crown lands. I regret the lateness at which the Bill has been brought down, but I hope it will go through and be administered in the proper spirit. If this is done it will be greatly to the advantage of the returned soldier and of the State. We have to realise that we are living in times that are totally different from those which have ever been experienced before, and that we must do a great deal more than we have done in the past.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON (North-East) [4.30]: I almost feel disinclined to speak on this Bill after the optimism evinced by Mr. Ewing. I do not wish to destroy that optimism, but I cannot speak in the general terms which he has used either in reference to the settler on the land or in reference to the land itself. My experience is that, whereas all that Mr. Ewing says of some parts of Western Australia and of some settlers in certain districts is true, I regret that the pessimism of Mr. Greig is also true in some instances. I take the view that properly managed men can still be settled on the land, whether returned soldiers or others. In connection with repatriation, it appears that the Government have realised at last that they have grave responsibilities. After two years and the thoughts of the combined brains of the National Government of this State, this Bill has been produced. The responsibility taken by this Government is the responsibility of spending Federal money on a scheme presumably evolved by themselves. I believe in land settlement, but I do not wish to see the land boom system introduced with regard to the settlement of our returned soldiers. The hon. Mr. Mitchell, who was Minister for Lands, comes in for a good deal of abuse, and his actions have at the same time met with the approval of many members in both Houses on account of his land policy. I know what took place under the settlement scheme for

which he was responsible. I hope, despite the booming that hon. gentleman received, that we are not going to introduce the same method in the land settlement of our returned soldiers that was introduced in connection with so many of our settlers. Some of our settlers have made good even under the scheme set forward by the hon. Mr. Mitchell, but I think very few returned soldiers would make good under these conditions. The usual land boom policy was put into operation. Men were induced to go out there by eloquent addresses and promises, and, I regret to say, to some extent, by misrepresentation. Whatever system is adopted to get the returned soldier on to the land, no one is justified in adopting that system, even if we do not get one soldier to take up land. They have to go there understanding the position, and it is the duty of those responsible to see that they do understand the conditions under which they have to work. I have visited the Harvey estate, which affords an example of what can be done under this returned soldiers settlement scheme. Here again I presume the State Government are responsible. Practically the only conditions under which our men can make good in Western Australia is that they shall be placed on land suitable for whatever branch of industry they may desire to take up, whether connected with agriculture or fruit growing. There are many returned soldiers settled on the Harvey estate. Even those who boom that estate must admit that much of the land there can only be classed as very indifferent. It is not by any means first class land, and in the long run I do not think these men are likely to make good upon it. Up to date I have only heard of one man, who is a very exceptional worker and very resourceful, making good there. I am sure that anyone who made the necessary inquiries would find that up to date the soldiers who are settled there have not made good in any way, and I see no prospect of their doing so. I hope I shall prove to be mistaken in this. It is well to face these things instead of attempting to gloss them over. Unless our returned soldiers are settled on land that is suitable for the purpose for which they require it, whether for wheat growing, grazing or mixed farming, there is no hope of their making good. Those who have been successful are those who have been fortunate enough to settle on a particularly good block. It is well known that land in this State is of a very patchy nature. As there have been many wide-awake people in this State, who know well the qualities of the land in the different districts and the value of it, to a great extent our good land has been selected, particularly that which is close to the railway line. If I were shown a block of land in our agricultural areas, and was told that it was a good block, I should feel it incumbent upon me to make inquiries to ascertain why it had not been taken up. It is necessary to be most careful before placing our returned soldiers on any land which has not been considered good enough by the smart land selector. I do not think the returned soldier is to be used for the purpose of being placed on land which is not considered good enough by other people to make a living off.

Careful administration is required in connection with any land settlement scheme. This Bill is probably all right, but it would amount to a tragedy unless care was taken in the selection of the men in the first place, and, secondly, unless care was taken to see that the individual was suited for the particular avocation in which he was to engage. In my opinion it will not be found that the suitable lands of the State are in the hands of the Crown, so far as the agricultural areas are concerned. The land will either be too far from a railway, or will be considered by those who know to be unsuitable for agricultural purposes. Then we come to the question of the price of land. I regard as a business proposition to a certain extent the concession that is made to returned soldiers, who are to be given conditional purchase leases at half price. It would pay Western Australia, if suitable settlers could be found, to give them these areas under the conditions laid down in the Bill. I do not see that we are giving the returned soldier any particular concession so far as this is concerned. I remember the late Mr. McLarty in this House mentioning something which I believe to be quite true. He said he did not consider the price of land for agricultural purposes a very great factor. I quite agree with that. I could point to districts in this State in which there are blocks of land quite valueless for the purpose of agriculture, but alongside these valueless blocks there are others worth up to £3 and £4 an acre. On the one block it would be impossible for a white man to make a living, but on another alongside it men had done remarkably well and made good even under the adverse conditions under which they have been working during the last 10 years. Everything depends on the class of land upon which these men are settled. It is not doing any man a good turn to place him upon an indifferent block and only charge him half of its assessed value. Such a man would have no chance of making good. He must be placed upon good agricultural land. The opinions expressed by members with regard to the South-West appear to conflict. I do not, however, propose to deal with that part of the State, but with the agricultural areas and the agricultural industry. Unless proper care is taken in the settlement of our returned soldier, he will spend all his advances without making any headway, and will have to be taken in hand again. Our liability does not cease after we have pitchforked a man on to a block of land, and we have told him to fend for himself. I do not think there is much prospect of our returned soldiers, after all they have been through, making good on virgin land. It cannot be a business proposition to ask these men to grow wheat in virgin forest country or some unimproved block, which will take them years to bring under cultivation. Although many of them will have been considerably shaken up by the hardships they have undergone, it may be possible for them on improved land to make good from the very start. Under such conditions they should get along, but cannot do so under the conditions which were in vogue some years ago. The best chance I can see for the returned soldier is to be placed on im-

proved land. It will then soon be known whether he is going to make a success of the venture or not. Mr. Cornell objects to the system of the selection of settlers, as proposed in the Bill, Clause 6. This clause says that in the event of there being more than one application from discharged soldiers or their dependants for land open to selection under this Act, it shall be the duty of the board to decide which applicant shall have the land. Mr. Cornell suggested the ballot system, which is in vogue in New South Wales. That means the introduction of the two-up school or the dice box to decide who shall be the successful applicant. In my opinion, there will be many returned soldiers applying for blocks of land who are in no way suited for the life; and if we are going to leave the matter to the determination of chance we shall be doing a very remarkable act of administration. The ballot is rather a different proposition where men with equal qualifications apply, but the success of this repatriation scheme depends upon selecting the right men—men who have had experience of the land, or men of sufficient initiative to make good. If we are to have a board, I would rather trust the intelligence of the board to do the selecting than leave it to the chance of the ballot box to pick the men most likely to make good. Therefore, in spite of Mr. Cornell's objection, I consider the provision in the Bill preferable to that system which he states obtains in New South Wales. Mr. Hickey has given notice of an amendment providing that pastoral leaseholds shall be made available for returned soldiers in this State, and presumably the matter will be discussed in Committee. However, there is one point I should like to mention in this connection. When a measure was passed some year or two ago extending pastoral leaseholds until 1948, it was admitted that there were then lessees holding areas exceeding the one million acres permitted. Since then, a further measure has been passed allowing such lessees to retain those excess areas until after the war, subject to payment of additional rental. I do not know whether the Government have been alive to the position, but I should say that the excess of any of those leaseholds, being areas selected by those who know the value of grazing land, might reasonably be made available to returned soldiers, either under this measure or under the Land Act—available, I mean, to returned soldiers who have had experience of pastoral life. I fear, however, that the holders of those excess areas are a bit more wideawake than the Government. I hold that view, having regard to the legislation which those interested in the pastoral industry have managed to get enacted for the benefit of themselves and their friends. The fact remains, however, that the Government had an opportunity, because they have been well aware for years that provision will have to be made for returned soldiers desirous of embarking on pastoral life. If the Government have allowed the holders of those excess areas to dispose of them, then of course this suggestion comes too late; but if the case is otherwise the Government might provide that those excess areas

shall be made available as I have suggested. However, the matter is one for the Committee stage. The question of providing funds in this instance does not very materially concern the Government of Western Australia, apart, of course, from the loss of revenue which will result from our charging only half rents for conditional purchase leases taken up by returned soldiers. The larger question of repatriation, however, is one for the Federal Government; and I do not know that much good can result from our berating the Federal Government for not having introduced long ere this some comprehensive scheme of repatriation. Still, I think it is not too much to ask of those responsible that they should outline a scheme. The Colonial Secretary said he did not rely too much upon repatriation schemes. Probably he is right, but the fact remains that the Government of Western Australia have had to introduce a section of a repatriation scheme; namely, the land settlement section. This Bill represents part of a repatriation scheme, the land settlement part of it. Many hon. members have asked the question, if we are going to give these concessions to the returned soldier settling on the land, how about all the others who are coming along for repatriation in other directions? Hon. members are perfectly justified in asking that question, because we all recognise the necessity of providing for those many soldiers who will desire to return to industrial avocations, or perhaps prospecting, or it may be gold-mining. We want to know how they are to be provided for, so that their treatment shall be on an equality with that accorded to the returned soldier who receives concessions through becoming a settler on the land. Thus arises the necessity for our being furnished with at least some outline of what the Federal Government propose to do in a general way for the returned soldier who is being repatriated or, in plain words, who is being found work. This Bill establishes precedents which other returned soldiers will insist on being uniformly applied to them also. I want to know, what about the prospectors? Many of those who left prospecting on the goldfields in order to enlist will be desirous of returning to their former avocation. But, considering the methods of our Mines Department, the most parsimonious department in Western Australia, it will be utterly impossible, without Federal Government aid, to look after those returned soldiers who desire to return to prospecting. Without aid from the Commonwealth, it will be impossible to obtain for them anything like a fair deal. I just mention this phase. I crave pardon for introducing a side issue. But immediately one speaks on repatriation one is impelled to recollect that there ought to be some system and some uniformity in the treatment of our returned soldiers. It is a matter for the representatives of mining constituencies to demand that those who enlisted in mining districts shall have the opportunity to return to their old avocations and shall also receive a fair measure of consideration from the Federal Gov-

ernment, it being plain that the State Government cannot possibly provide the necessary funds. Up to date the repatriation board in this State have, after a lot of persuasion, allotted the magnificent sum of £5,000 to assist prospectors, and they have recently notified all and sundry that the entire amount has been allotted and that the expenditure must now cease. That fund having been exhausted, we want to know whether any provision is being made by the Federal Government for the prospector on a somewhat broader and more generous scale than that represented by the trifling £5,000 so far made available? And so it will be in connection with returned soldiers desirous of resuming their former avocations in the industrial world. Private enterprise, we are told, will see to this. If private enterprise does, well and good. But, on the other hand, I say it is the duty of the State or of the Commonwealth, or of both, to provide employment for the returned soldiers. If private enterprise does not make positions available for these men, then I want to know what is the policy of the Federal Government and of the Western Australian Government in that case? Do those Governments realise that it is their duty to see that the returned soldier is found employment? I say there is no such thing as a repatriation scheme which leaves it to chance, or to the whim of private enterprise in Australia, whether these men are definitely to get employment. The position has to be faced, and neither the State nor the Commonwealth will be able to dodge the responsibility. We have a right to demand that the Commonwealth and State Governments that have made so many glib promises, written promises in some instances, shall not be allowed to dodge their responsibility merely saying, "We are going to encourage private enterprise to employ the returned soldiers." The time has come when the Governments of Australia must consider what they will do in the event of private enterprise failing to absorb the returned soldiers—and we hope to see them back in thousands very shortly. Providing sustenance for the returned soldiers is all very well; but, as the Colonial Secretary has said, it cannot continue, and the returned soldier does not want it to continue. Apart from this aspect of the matter, I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill; but before closing I also must take exception to the provision against which Mr. Cornell has protested—Subclause 2 of Clause 4, referring to misconduct. I strongly object to that clause. It is about time we treated the returned soldier as a returned soldier. From what I understand, the proposal is not to differentiate between the noisy tourist—and this particular tourist is the noisiest in Western Australia—and the dinkum soldier who did the fighting. So do not let us start to deal in a tidily-winking way with a man because he gave an officer cheek some two or three years back. If we are embarking on a scheme for the repatriation of our soldiers, let us cut out such nonsense, since we know that under military regulations something for which a man would be admired in civil life may get him into serious

trouble. Mr. Cornell objects to that, and all of us, as Australians, object to it. With these remarks I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES (North) [4.58]: I have much pleasure in supporting the measure, but I regret that it has been brought forward by the Government so late. Every possible aid should be given to the returned soldier to settle on the land, and also to repatriate him in other directions. In introducing the Bill the Colonial Secretary referred to public works which would be initiated in order to employ returned soldiers in other walks of life. I agree with Mr. Millington that men in other walks of life should be provided for as well as the men returning to settle on the land. As mentioned by Mr. Millington, better provision should be made for the prospector. A sum of £5,000 has been placed in the hands of the State Government by the Federal Government to assist these men back to their avocation. I consider it is the duty of the State Government to assist the returned soldier miner in the same way as the returned soldier settling on the land. And the returned soldier who desires to take up pearling should receive equal consideration. All classes of workers are coming back from the Front, and no provision whatever is being made for them. I take strong exception to the want of action on the part of Commonwealth and State Governments alike as regards providing for the returned soldier apart from land settlement. Speaking on a taxation measure before the House last session, I suggested that exemption to some extent might be granted to returned soldiers. The Colonial Secretary then told me that such a proposal could be brought forward when the question of repatriation was under discussion. We waited another six or twelve months and there is no opportunity now of relieving those men from paying the same tax as those of us who have never been to the Front. I know of cases of wounded men who have returned and who are drawing the same salary as men who did not go to the Front, being compelled to pay the same income tax as those who remained behind. That is a scandal and a disgrace. Something should have been done to give those men exemption. My idea is that every man who has seen service should be exempted up to, say, £300. In that way we would show our appreciation of what had been done for us by those who went away; and those who had not been able to fight, I am sure, would be only too glad to pay a little additional taxation so that exemption might be given to the returned soldiers. I have illustrated a case of partners in a firm, one of whom went to the Front and the other remained behind. The man who went away has returned wounded, and is paying the same tax on his property as the partner who never risked his life. Then, again, what is being done to assist the men who formerly engaged in the pearling or the mining industries; how is it that the State Government have not done anything to provide for those men? They have as much right to consideration at

the hands of the State as those who propose to settle on the land. The miner has in the past been a valuable asset to the State and he will continue to be so in the future. We are about to go into recess, but what will happen to the miners coming home within the next six months, we do not know. I suppose they will on their return draw sustenance allowance. We are told that the Federal Government have provided £5,000 and no more for the assistance of returning miners. We also find that a committee to repatriate those men has been appointed, and that one of the members of that committee is a member of the Perth Chamber of Commerce. What does he know about settling miners, or assisting pearlers to return to that vocation? A worse man could not have been chosen. A board of mining men should have been appointed to repatriate the men who were formerly connected with the mining industry, and a board with some knowledge of pearling should have been requested to undertake the duty of assisting the pearlers to get back to that industry. There are cases where assistance which has been given to returned soldiers has been abused through lack of attention or supervision of these matters. A pearling lease at Shark Bay was submitted for sale by tender or by auction, and in one case £40 was offered for the area. In another case, in order to assist a returned soldier, the pearling lease was granted to that soldier for £5. That soldier found a buyer for it at £100. The State should not allow that kind of thing to take place. Assistance should certainly not be given in that way so that the recipient might barter it. I understand that the man who effected that deal soon afterwards left the country. I have heard of another case where assistance was given a soldier to take up a pastoral area which had been reserved for all time. Station owners were anxious to get hold of that property, but they did not succeed. A returned soldier came along and secured it. A squatter, whose property was close by, offered the returned soldier £700 or £800 for the block. What I want to know is whether there is anything in the Bill to provide against that kind of thing continuing in the future.

Hon. J. Ewing: There is a provision which will prevent that.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: I hope there is and that the State will be fully protected. There certainly did not appear to be anything to prevent what I have related in connection with the pearling lease at Shark Bay. I agree with the remarks of Mr. Dodd, that we should resume private land for our soldiers, and it is a very good idea, if the Government are to repurchase estates, that they should pay the value which is put on them by the owners for taxation purposes, plus 10 per cent. If the owner is not satisfied, it will prove that he has been defrauding the State through the Taxation Department by under-valuing the property.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Whose value would you take?

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: The owner's value, and if he has not been undervaluing it, the payment of his own valuation plus 10 per cent. ought to be sufficient payment.

Hon. V. Hamersley: There is a discrepancy between the unimproved value and the value with improvement.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: The value of the improvement can be arrived at by arbitration.

Hon. V. Hamersley: You would collar the improvements?

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: No, we should pay for the improvements at a fair valuation. I regretted to hear the remarks of Mr. Ewing with reference to what was said by Mr. Greig.

Hon. J. Ewing: He deserved it.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: I do not know that he did. He has his own opinions as to whether returned soldiers should be settled on our agricultural areas. I am as big an optimist as anyone in this country, but I would not like to see soldiers placed on land which would not be of use to them.

Hon. J. Ewing: Mr. Greig would not settle them at all on the land.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: Mr. Greig's remarks with regard to protection prove to us why we have not been able to develop our primary industries as we should have done. I want to see the Federal Government alter their methods in that direction. There is another question to which I wish to refer and it is one to which I have already alluded—I refer to the War Profits Tax. I have alluded to it from the floor of the House once or twice, but I have never been able to get the support of any hon. member. That is because, I suppose, their profits have not been affected. That tax has considerably retarded the development and the prosperity of Western Australia.

Hon. A. Sanderson: What can we do?

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: We can keep on bringing under the notice of the Federal Government the fact that it is doing us so much injury.

Hon. A. Sanderson: That has already been done.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: Those who are engaged in industries in this country are being robbed by the Federal Government. The poor man whose property has arrived at a profit earning stage is called upon to pay the War Profits Tax but the man who was making big profits before the war started goes along without interruption.

Hon. J. Ewing: Are they not altering it now?

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: It is before the Federal Parliament now, and it is the duty of every member representing the pastoralists in particular to see that the poor squatters, whose properties are just reaching the profit-earning stage, should not continue to pay £3,000 war profits tax while the bigger man is only paying on the difference in the increased price of wool. I am the only man who has spoken here on this subject and I asked the Colonial Secretary to request the Premier when in Melbourne to bring the matter before the Federal authorities with a view to

having the Act repealed. I know that half a million of money would find its way into Western Australia if that tax were repealed, and that sum would assist to place a few thousand returned men in profitable employment.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: The Prime Minister said they would not do it.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: No effort has been made to bring about a repeal of that tax but perhaps they may do it now. It is the most unjust tax ever imposed on any people. I desire to say a few words now in connection with the pastoral industry. Mr. Ewing referred to the Press not reporting the proceedings of this House. I hope they will keep my name out of the paper if all they can do is to give me credit for statements made by other members. I was accused of having made the statement that I was in favour of setting alight to the forests. Having lived in a forest for six or seven years I can assure the House that I am entirely opposed to that policy. Yesterday in the "Sunday Times" I noticed that they gave me credit for referring to the squatters as the "shepherd princes" and also to the fact that I was not in favour of the extension of the pastoral leases to squatters. In reply to Mr. Mills who actually expressed those views a few nights ago, I may state that when the Land Bill was before the House an extension of the leases was granted to 1948, an additional 20 years, on condition that the squatters paid double rent until the land was classified. There was a clause in that Bill making the maximum £3 for a thousand acres. That clause was deleted and no maximum was fixed. Already the State is getting an extra £60,000 a year from the squatters and if the extension had not come about, it would have made a difference to the State of £600,000 or £700,000 which it will now receive in extra rents. When the land is classified I venture to say that the State will derive between one million and two millions sterling from the pastoralists between now and 1928, the time when the present leases would have expired. Once that land is re-valued it is to be re-appraised in 15 years and then they cannot increase it more than the double rate. They can classify the land now at £2 or £3 per thousand acres but it must be re-appraised in 15 years. Pastoralists were not getting this extra tenure without paying for it. Anything the pastoralist gets he is prepared to pay for.

Hon. J. Mills: He is well able to pay for it.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: There are many men able to pay who do not pay. In this case the State is getting £60,000 a year extra rent from the pastoralists. When the land is classified the Government will get more revenue; if they get the classification scheme going quickly they will receive more than double the £60,000 annually. With reference to the remarks of Mr. Hickey regarding the resumption of some of the pastoral areas, I am certain that in the North-West no soldier or anybody else can make a living out of 20,000 acres of land, that is if they cannot get indentured labour. If the hon. member will assist me to secure indentured labour I will do my best

to get the Kimberley areas cut into blocks of 20,000 acres where tropical culture can be followed. That is the only way in which anyone can make a living out of 20,000 acres of land. In the Kimberley areas there is a rainfall of between 30 and 40 inches, and it is possible to conserve water and irrigate. The suggestion made by Mr. Millington is a more reasonable one. Under the Land Bill a million acres is the area a pastoralist is allowed to hold. Any other land that is being surrendered the Government may reserve for the settlement of returned soldiers, that is, if men have experience and can find capital to finance them. In that case I would be in favour of the scheme. I want to refer now to an article in the "West Australian" of the 14th December with reference to repatriation of soldiers. A meeting of the Claremont-Cottesloe branch of the Returned Soldiers' Association was held to deal with the subject. Major Summerhayes, a returned soldier himself, presided and he went on to say—

The chairman extended a welcome to Mr. J. Thompson who has had considerable experience in the North-West. That experience has been gained playing auction bridge in the smoke room of a ship, and he has also had a little mining experience, which cost him some of his capital. The report continues—

After an interesting speech from that gentleman the following motion was carried, "We believe that from 2,000 to 3,000 returned soldiers can be settled between the Murchison and Fitzroy Rivers by dividing up the large areas held by the present squatters into blocks of 1,000 or 2,000 acres, to carry a minimum of 500 sheep.

I never heard of such an absurd proposition. And this was put forward by a returned officer as a means of settling returned soldiers on the land!

Hon. J. Mills: It must be a misprint.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: At all events this gentleman came along and discussed it with me next morning. I said, "Why, you are mad; what are you going to do in drought time?" And he said, "Oh, we are going to grow lucerne to help the sheep over any dry period." Now it is suggested that it is a misprint. It is only putting a mill-stone round—

Hon. W. Kingsmill: A mill-stone or a mile-stone?

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: A mill-stone. It is putting a mill-stone round the neck of the returned soldier. No person can profitably work land up there with an area of less than 100,000 acres. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM (North-East) [5.17]: It is unnecessary that I should regret the delay in introducing the Bill. Ever since we first sent our men overseas we have realised that we should be faced with the problem of repatriation. At least one State in the Commonwealth has stood up to its responsibilities and got to work early, with the result that to-day it has the most successful land settlement scheme in Australia for returned soldiers. I refer to Queensland. I entirely dis-

agree with the principle of the Bill in reference to the acquiring of repurchased estates. We are to repurchase land at a value that will be the means of loading a debt on to the returned soldier which he will have some difficulty in shaking off. The difficulty confronting Australia in regard to land development is that so many men are allowed to hold land unused. Perhaps it is useless to put forward the suggestion that, instead of providing for the repurchase of estates for the settlement of returned soldiers, we might well tax the land values with the view to forcing the unused lands into use. It is well to remember that one of the influences retarding production in this State is the high rate of freightage on the railways. We provide in the Bill for the settlement of soldiers on the land with a view to increased production. But we must realise that the very high rate of railway freightage is working to the detriment of production, not only in regard to our agricultural community, but also in respect of mining and other industries. The Queensland Government have made provision to hand over to the returned soldiers on perpetual lease, selections at a rental of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. per annum on the capital value of the land for a period of 15 years, after which re-appraisements are to be made. As Queensland has a land board, they have all the machinery for making those re-appraisements. That is a far better scheme than is proposed in the Bill. Under the Bill the returned soldier on the land is faced with the payment of the purchase money after five years; he has then to start paying the purchase money for the freehold of the land. In Queensland the returned soldier will be able to go along for 15 years paying only  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of the capital value of the land. He knows his position; he knows that he is on a perpetual lease. Certainly the State of Queensland retains the right to re-appraise the rent; but under the Bill we are placing an unnecessary burden on the returned soldiers to be settled on the land. Some may argue that our returned soldiers will be better satisfied to know that they are to have the freehold. Yet in Queensland the men are satisfied with the perpetual lease, and up to date Queensland is the most successful State in the Commonwealth with the land settlement of returned soldiers. I think we might take stock of what is being done there.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: That is not in accordance with the statistics quoted by the leader of the House.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: When the evidence is submitted I think everyone will agree that the system in Queensland is the most up-to-date in Australia.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: It is not getting the results.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: The Queensland scheme provides that before the men are placed on the land they shall be given the necessary technical training on farms set aside for the purpose. When the manager of the training farm is satisfied that a certain number of men are qualified to go out and work their own blocks, those men are released from

the training farm and provision is made for their group settlement on the land. After hearing the remarks of Mr. Greig and other members, it seems to me we have in this State a great difficulty in the way of group settlement, for the reason that our lands are so patchy. In Queensland the quality of the land is more uniform, and so they can go in for group settlement. There the returned soldier on the training farm is paid £2 per week, and when he is qualified to go on to a block he ballots with others for the blocks available. There is no provision in the Bill for such a scheme in Western Australia. It seems to me that as long as the applicant can satisfy the board that he is suitable, he can go straight on to the land. Every applicant should first be given the necessary training. The returned soldiers should have the necessary technical knowledge of the work to ensure at least some measure of success.

Hon. H. Stewart: Perhaps those allowed to go straight on to the land have the necessary experience.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: Numbers of the returned soldiers had holdings before they went to the war, but there are numbers of others who had definitely left their farms before they enlisted. Maybe some of them were forced to leave the land through insufficient knowledge of the work. That is the class of men whose training should be completed. The men who have a thorough training, it may be assumed, have their holdings to go back to, and those men, of course, will require no further training. To safeguard, not only the interests of the soldier, but also those of the people of the State, the Government should see to it that the men to be settled on the land under the proposed scheme have the necessary qualifications to ensure some fair measure of success. It is useless to put on the land men who are unsuited for the work through not having the necessary technical knowledge.

Hon. H. Stewart: Have you no faith in the qualification board?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: The board may be all right, but I do not see in the Bill any provision for the establishment of training farms where men may acquire the necessary knowledge. I hope the leader of the House will explain the position when replying. It was suggested that we might have one at Yandanoorka. I did not understand the leader of the House to say that it was the intention of the Government to provide a training farm at Yandanoorka. What is the proposal of the Government, and what instruction do they intend to give the board as far as the training of these men is concerned, in order to qualify them for the job they take in hand? It is only by this means that they will have a reasonable chance of success.

Hon. H. Stewart: Clause 23 refers to this.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: I want the leader of the House to tell me what the intentions of the Government are. I agree with Mr. Millington and Mr. Miles, that it is only this one department in the repatriation scheme that we are to have operating in Western

Australia, that for the settlement of discharged soldiers on the land. I cannot understand the reason for the delay on the part of the Government in taking steps to repatriate discharged soldiers who have no desire to go upon the land. Many men who enlisted from this State, and were over 30 years of age, were previously connected with the timber industry, the gold mining industry, and others in Western Australia. A few days ago we did something to retain the rights of the men who had been working in the hewing industry before they went to the war, but at present no provision is made for men who have been drawn from the gold mining industry to join the military forces. I know that the Commonwealth Government furnished a sum of something like £5,000 for the purpose of enabling returned discharged soldiers, who have been connected with the mining industry, to do prospecting work on our goldfields; but I understand that scheme has practically dropped out of existence. We have heard nothing from the Government recently as to the way in which they propose to repatriate the men who were connected with that industry. The people of the metropolitan area do not realise what they owe to the gold mining industry. They are hardly awake to the part this industry has played in the prosperity of Western Australia during the war period. All that has been done is to increase the railway freights, so as to make it almost impossible for prospecting to be carried out. Business men and others, who in the past could afford to assist the prospector, owing to the high prices ruling now are almost precluded from rendering any assistance whatever to the prospector. The result is that mining in outback centres is almost dead. There are very few outside the well established mines operating to-day. If the Government are going to allow the men who come back to this State, who before going to the war were connected with the mining industry, either to drift about the City or the country districts, or take on some other industry, then it seems that the Government are quite prepared to allow the gold mining industry to go on starving just as it is being starved at present because the railway freights are so high, and so little encouragement is given to those connected with it. This is a matter which should be taken in hand at once by the Government. Many of our old miners have come back from the war to go straight into the Wooroloo Sanatorium. The fact that they were for a number of years previously connected with the mining industry has now they have returned, rendered them unfit to follow their old avocation, with the result that they have drifted into the Wooroloo Sanatorium. The Government should do something in the direction of fostering mining for the purpose of bringing back to Western Australia the old days of prosperity. Of course I realise that every hole put into the ground is a graveyard for the men who are working in it under present conditions. It is well, therefore, that the Government should not only take into consideration the enabling of pros-



pecting parties of discharged soldiers to go out into our goldfields areas, but that they should also see that all consumptives are excluded from working underground in our mines. To-day the man who has contracted consumption in years past is allowed to work alongside the man who is perfectly healthy.

Hon. J. E. Dodd: That has been stopped now.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: It has not been stopped.

Hon. J. E. Dodd: What about the Mine Workers' Relief Fund?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: That body has no power to stop consumptive men from working underground.

Hon. J. E. Dodd: There is provision for that under the Mining Act.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: Although the power is there it is not exercised. No effort has been made to prevent consumptives working underground. We have healthy men and consumptive men working together in some narrow drive or stope, with the result that the healthy man soon becomes unhealthy. Mr. Holmes referred to Denmark as the Gippsland of Western Australia, and said that there was in that part of the State land equal to anything found in Gippsland. He said that the trouble was that, owing to the labour conditions, the land could not be made available, that the go slow policy of the workers was responsible for this. This is the first time that I have heard of landholders in any part of Western Australia agreeing to have their work done under the day labour system. My experience is that the general rule is for them to have their work done under contract, or under the piece work system.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I was referring to Crown lands.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: There is machinery here to provide for the clearing of Crown lands. I do not advocate either the contract or the piece work system. My experience is that the workers have very little chance, owing to the prices fixed, of adopting the go slow policy. As a matter of fact, they have to go for their lives. The same thing is found in other avenues of employment. If they wanted an example of the go slow policy they would only have to look to members of Parliament, who have adopted that policy for many years. We have adopted it in connection with repatriation, and it is only at Christmas time in 1918 that this Bill is introduced. The workers have not far to look for a lead. As the Government have adopted that policy, it might readily be expected that other people in the State would follow their example.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Do you think that two wrongs make a right?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: I have yet to find a body of workers who have practised the go slow policy. We have only to look at the men getting off the trams and trains, to see the condition they are in when ceasing their employment for the day. We have only to go into any of the works in Perth, or into the timber industry, or the mining industry, to see how hard the men have to work.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Do you think they are tired because they walk slowly?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: I know what they do. They are forced, under our present conditions, to give more than full value for the money they receive, otherwise they will not keep their jobs. We have business managers in Western Australia as keen as in any other parts of the world. These men seem to be able to get the maximum amount of work out of their employees for the minimum amount of pay. If there is a go slow policy, it is found in the action of the employers in giving their employees the minimum amount of wage instead of recognising what amounts to a fair day's work for their men to do.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: Why not have the piece work system throughout, and let the men be paid for what they do?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: That system exists almost everywhere already. I support the Bill, and when in Committee intend to vote for some of the amendments on the Notice Paper.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East—in reply) [5.40]: The chief question raised by a number of speakers has been this—what is to be done for the soldier who is not provided for under this particular Bill, the soldier who does not intend to settle on the land? The responsibility in regard to the soldier who does not intend to settle on the land is, in the first instance, a responsibility assumed by the Federal Government. In my second reading speech I endeavoured to make it clear that, notwithstanding this responsibility had been assumed by the Federal Government, I did not consider it either right or wise that the State—I am speaking of the State Government and of the people of the State—should lightly regard their responsibilities towards their own citizens who return to Western Australia, whether they desire to settle on the land or to go in for any other form of occupation.

Hon. H. Stewart: Are you speaking as the representative of the Government in this Chamber?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes. That is the policy of the Government. They have to regard their responsibilities to their citizens who are returning, even though the Federal Government say, "We will look after the returned soldier in every respect except those who want to settle on the land." The Government recognise that if the Federal Government failed to make due provision for soldiers in Western Australia it might mean that Western Australia would lose its population. The Government also recognise that, whilst it is the intention of the Federal Government to do certain things, it does not intend to provide employment on a large scale. The Federal scheme of repatriation, speaking in a general way, is a generous and comprehensive one. It is a scheme which, if well administered and carried out in the full spirit of the repatriation scheme, will mean that more will be attempted for the soldier returning to Australia after this war than has been attempted for soldiers from any

other country returning after any other war. In this State there is no doubt that the Federal activities in this matter are retarded by our distance from the seat of government. We suffer from a number of disabilities in this connection. Members will have noticed that there is a Bill before the Federal Parliament providing for housing facilities for returned soldiers, and for the dependants of fallen soldiers. So far, only brief summaries of the Bill have been telegraphed. I think it was only discussed on the second reading for the first time in the Senate two or three days ago. It appears to have been founded to a great extent on the Workers' Homes Acts, which are in force in this and the other States, although it apparently goes further than these measures. It provides for an advance up to £700 at five per cent., and recognises that the lending of money at that rate of interest is likely to involve the Commonwealth in a loss of perhaps one per cent., including the cost of administration and the extra interest over and above the five per cent. which the Commonwealth will be called upon to pay. It is stated in the second reading speech on the measure that the amount of money involved may run to anything over 14 millions sterling—probably it will be a good deal more than that. I have no doubt that that expenditure is intended to be something in the way of an equivalent to what is being done in the matter of land settlement. That is something for returned soldiers who do not intend to settle on the land, but intend to resume their ordinary occupations, resume employment, or go in for some other form of business. Before referring in detail to the remarks of hon. members, let me say that I hope I shall be excused if there are any references that I omit to take notice of, because hon. members will recognise that after the large number of very interesting speeches which have been delivered it would be quite impossible for me to comment on all the points which have been raised. Mr. Cornell suggested that some discrimination should be made between the different classes of soldiers, between those who had seen active service and those who had not. I do not think that would be a wise discrimination, and I fail entirely to reconcile it with the protest which Mr. Cornell and other members have made against Subclause 2 of Clause 4. That clause represents the only discrimination which this Bill contemplates—discrimination between the soldier with the good discharge and the soldier who has not a good discharge. My personal opinion is that Subclause 2 of Clause 4 should be amended. I do not know that I would go so far as to say that it ought to be struck out altogether, but I will go this far: I do not think that the fact of a man having committed some offence against military discipline and having therefore failed to get a clean discharge should shut him out altogether from the privileges of this Bill. I do think there should be some means by which he could go to the board—and I have no doubt that his discharge will show what he was discharged for—and by which the board would have discrimination.

I consider the man should not be absolutely excluded because he may have committed some military offence. Consequently, while I cordially agree with Mr. Cornell that we should not necessarily discriminate against the man who cannot show a good discharge, I am unable to agree with the hon. member's suggestion that we should discriminate according to length or merit of service. If we started any discrimination of that kind, I do not know where we should find ourselves.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Leave it to the board.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: We should act on the principle that all have done their best and are therefore entitled to the best we can do for them. Some remarks have been made on the question of the chairman's powers. No special provision is made in the Bill on that point, and consequently the chairman of the board will have no exceptional powers. That is to say, he will not be given two votes, as is intended, I believe, by another Bill which the House will be called on to consider. In that measure special provision is made for the chairman's powers. In the present Bill, however, no special provision is made. It is intended that the chairman shall be elected by the board, and that he shall otherwise enjoy the same privileges as the other members of the board, but no greater, and, generally, the whole procedure of the board will be laid down in regulations, as set out in the last subclause of Clause 5—

The proceedings of the board shall be conducted as prescribed by regulations. Reference also was made to the matter of the board delegating their powers, as provided by Clause 6, Subclause 2. Now, this delegation refers only to certain powers contained in paragraphs (a), (b), and (c) in Subclause 1 of Clause 6. Paragraph (a) reads—

To investigate, with power to take evidence on oath, the qualifications of each discharged soldier who has registered his name in the prescribed manner, and, if satisfied that he possesses the necessary qualifications, to issue a certificate to that effect.

The necessity for delegating the power in that case is that it may frequently be found very much more desirable that the local repatriation committee—and many excellent committees have been formed in various parts of the State—should be entrusted with the work of inquiring into the case of some particular soldier. Paragraph (b) reads—

To inquire into applications from discharged soldiers or their dependants who may desire to settle on the land or to avail themselves of any of the provisions of this Act.

And paragraph (c) is as follows—

In the event of there being more than one application from discharged soldiers or their dependants for land open to selection under this Act, to decide to which of the applicants the block shall be allotted. In those respects it is thought that the local knowledge of local repatriation committees may serve a useful purpose.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: On what method will the board decide?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I take it that the methods of the board would be very similar to the methods which have at all times been supposed to guide the board that has already sat from time to time to decide the merits of rival applicants for land thrown open. It has been suggested that this should be done by ballot, as is done in some of the States. It is purely a matter of opinion. I do not think it is a matter on which anyone would like to be very dogmatic. Of course, the objection may be taken that possibly favouritism would be shown when the matter is left to a board. I do not know that favouritism can always be avoided, and I do feel this, that if the board do their work properly, then the ballot is not so good a system of deciding between two rival applicants as is the decision of the board acting on the evidence before them. I think the board ought to make a better decision than would the tossing of a coin; but I admit that it is possible the board might make a worse decision. It seems to me that in matters of this kind the wisest course is to make the provision that would yield the best results if the work was done rightly. Reference has been made to the position which would arise in the event of the soldier who has taken up land, dying, and also to the case which might arise of a man who held land, having gone to the war and been killed, leaving his land to certain dependants. I have asked the Solicitor General to put me up a brief memorandum setting out what the position would actually be; not with a view to arguing what it ought to be, or anything of that kind, but simply the position as it would obtain under the Bill. The Solicitor General writes as follows:—

Under this Bill as it stands the reduction in the price of land (i.e., the annual rent payable under a C.P. lease) is personal to the discharged soldier, or to a dependant of the discharged soldier, as a settler on the land. It is a concession extending to the soldier or his dependant subject to settlement on the land. It is not such a concession as would increase the selling price of the land on a transfer otherwise than to a discharged soldier. Neither the discharged soldier nor his dependant will have the benefit of this concession by way of increase in the selling price of the land. It was, I understand, intended that neither the discharged soldier nor his dependant should profit by this concession on a sale of land. It is a concession to be enjoyed as a settler on the land, and only in that capacity. It is not, as I understand, intended that the discharged soldier or the dependant of a discharged soldier should hold land at half price as a saleable asset. I think that puts the position very clearly and very properly.

As regards the reduction of the rate of interest on mortgages, the ordinary current rate, I think, would be reached in five years (Clause 15). Any transfer in the meantime would be subject to the approval of the Minister, and subject to such conditions as the

Minister might think fit; and if the transfer was authorised otherwise to the discharged soldier it would probably be made a condition that the interest to be payable under the mortgage would be at the ordinary current rate.

That is, if the transfer was authorised to any person except to a discharged soldier. A good deal has been said in regard to the Minister who is to administer the measure. All I can say in that matter is that the definition sets out clearly what is intended to be done. "Minister" means "the Minister for Lands or other responsible Minister of the Crown charged for the time being with the administration of the Act."

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Who is the Minister for Lands?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Minister for Lands is the hon. Mr. Lefroy, and under this Bill he is charged with the administration of the measure. Sir Edward Wittenoom has asked where the men are to come from who are going to settle on the land. I believe there will be a great many men wanting to settle on the land who did not previously follow that occupation; and there is also this to be considered: a very large number of those who went away to the war were farm employees. Now it is quite conceivable that when these men come back, having, as many of them have, a very complete knowledge of farming, they will be inclined to say, "Why should not we go farming on our own account?"

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Because the employee generally gets more money than the farmer.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: If the employee takes that view, if he prefers to remain an employee, there is nothing in this Bill to force him to take up land.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: That is all right.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I quite agree with those members who say that the success of the scheme will depend both on the careful selection of the farm and on the careful selection of the man; but I do think it very probable that many of the old farm employees, men who like the work and understand it, men who previously did not go in for farming on their own account probably because they did not see their way clear financially, will take advantage of this Bill; and if they are inclined to do that, surely there is nothing more suitable than that we should enable a farm labourer who has fought for his country, to become a farmer on his own account. I think, too, that many who previously were engaged in city occupations will have the desire to go on the land in preference to returning to their old employment. However, this points to a big question which I do not propose to discuss this evening. We know that in a large number of occupations previously exclusively followed by men, girls are now employed. I do not know whether that is going to be a permanent feature of our new life or not; but I do feel that it will be a great deal better for Western Australia if in many of those clerical positions girls continue to be

employed, while the men previously employed in those positions are doing the work of producers in various parts of Australia. From those sources we hope to get a good number of settlers. Next as regards the establishment of probation farms. Both Avondale and Brunswick are to be used for this purpose.

Member: Exclusively?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I will not say that. Avondale we are cutting up for settlement by soldiers, retaining, however, the homestead and a very considerable area of land for the purpose of the farm training school. But it would be misleading to say that Avondale is to be used exclusively for the purpose of a farm training school, since a certain proportion of it is to be cut up for soldier settlement. Brunswick will also be used for the purpose of a farm training school. Applications have already been received from many returned soldiers, and arrangements are well in hand. Some men will be ready to go into these farm training schools directly after the holidays, and the farms will be ready to receive them. I admit that possibly it would be better had the men been there before, but I am just telling hon. members the position as it is to-day. Sir Edward Wittenoom said that from Bridgetown to Nannine there was not 1,000 acres of unoccupied land alongside the railways that he would take as a gift. I do not know exactly what the hon. member meant—whether by "unoccupied land" he meant land to which no one had acquired any title, land still in the hands of the Crown, or land that was not being put to use.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: What I meant was land that had been alienated, belonging to other people, and which had not been put to use.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am glad to have that explanation. The hon. member's statement then was that from Bridgetown to Nannine there was not 1,000 acres of unused land near the railways that one would take at a gift.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: That is my opinion.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The chief trouble referred to by Mr. Ewing was that no one knew exactly what land we had within reasonable distance of the railway in the South-Western Division. Mr. Ewing said that the work of classifying the land within a reasonable distance of the railways should have been undertaken three years ago. It would have been a good thing if it had been done 10 years ago. It was suggested by officers of the Lands Department more than three years ago that the land should be classified; it was suggested long before there was any talk of a repatriation movement, in fact before there was any thought of war. From the railway point of view and from the land settlement, and the general point of view of the State's financial position and its possibilities, it is imperative that we should know just what land we have within reach of our existing railway system. Not only that, but what sort of land it is, what it is suitable for, and an equally important point,

what use it is being put to. The comprehensive classification was commenced in June of the present year. Previously it had been deferred from time to time because it was feared that the work would be too costly. It was only when the necessity arose for providing land for returned soldiers that the classification became imperative and instructions were given that it should be done. An officer of the department who I believe made the first suggestion in regard to this classification five or six years ago, said at the time that the cost would not exceed  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per acre. Up to the present time the work has been completed so far as over half a million acres are concerned. That is to say, not merely has the classification been completed, but also the planning in most elaborate detail has been done, and the cost works out exactly as the officer estimated, namely, approximately,  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per acre. As the work proceeds, it is only reasonable to suppose that the men engaged upon it will become more expert and therefore we can assume that the cost of the whole work will not exceed  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per acre. The total area within a distance of seven miles of the railway in the South-West—we are not taking the extreme limit within which wheat can profitably be grown—is estimated at something like 12 million acres, so that the total cost of the classification of the whole of that land will be approximately £25,000.

Hon. J. Mills: Alienated lands?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: All lands within seven miles of the railway in the whole of the South-West Division.

Hon. J. Mills: We can take it for granted it is all alienated.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Probably. I venture to say that no sum of money has ever been spent to greater advantage by this State. I have here a plan showing the classification work already carried out. I will leave the plan on the Table for hon. members to peruse at their leisure. It shows the work that has been done up to the present time in the oldest settled areas of the State and therefore in the country that proportionately is most extensively used. It starts near Spencer's Brook and goes in an easterly direction to Cunderdin and Quairading—it takes in the country a little beyond Cunderdin—and goes down towards Beverley. It is the portion of Western Australia that is the oldest settled and the portion on which improvements are most extensive. In that portion there are 164,275 acres classified as A1. The land is divided into three sections, first class, second class, and third class. There are 132,670 acres of A2 and 87,175 of B2. With regard to third class land there are 31,920 acres of B1 and 40,670 acres of B2. With regard to third class land there are 59,345 acres of the best, 27,915 acres of what may be classed as C2, and 31,525 acres of C3. These areas total 573,475 acres. There are 308,590 acres that are cultivated and cleared and 266,890 acres uncleared, which is to say that in this, the oldest

settled portion of Western Australia, the portion in which the greatest amount of development work has been done, only a little more than half of the total area has been cleared.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: All that third class land is not worth clearing.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Amongst the cleared land there is a good deal of that which is third class.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: I suppose it does not want clearing; it is sand plain.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The plans set out the whole matter in complete detail. These statistics have been taken from the classification just completed.

Hon. H. Carson: How have they classified the land?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Eight surveyors with assistants are engaged upon this work and during the past five months they have examined and classified 1,457,729 acres of the finest agricultural country of the State within seven miles of the railway. Although that area has been examined, everything has been completed in regard to a little over half a million acres. That is to say, plans have been prepared and elaborate details supplied.

Hon. H. Millington: Is that land under process of alienation?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes, partially and wholly alienated. During the next six months these parties will complete the work embracing an area of some two million acres. The classification plans of 575,475 acres show that there are 384,120 acres of first class land. The total area cleared is only 308,000 acres, so that if it were assumed that no second or third class land was worth clearing, we should still have in this oldest settled portion of the State, 80,000 acres of first class land still uncleared. There are 72,570 acres of second class land and only 118,000 acres of third class land, so that the area of third class land is considerably less than half of the area of land uncleared, and everyone knows there is a considerable area of third class land cleared. It is a mistake to suppose that anything like the total area of wheat-growing land in that part of the State has been cleared, let alone used.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: It is not visible along the railway line.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is rather difficult to see seven miles from the railway line. That is the position found by the surveyors within seven miles of the railway line, and it will readily be admitted that seven miles is a safe distance to farm from a railway. Of course farming can be carried on successfully at a little greater distance, but seven miles is quite a safe proposition.

Hon. J. Ewing: Have you any plans of the classification work in the South-West?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: This is the only plan I have. Any information the hon. member desires can be obtained for him at once if he asks for it. When we know exactly the quality of the whole of the land in the South-West Division within seven miles of the railway, and when we also know ex-

actly the use to which this land has been put, then the Government will be in a position that no Government have ever been in before in regard to developing their policy of land settlement. I regard this work of classification alone as a development of the very highest importance and something from which the State will reap a great advantage, irrespective of the fact that an immediate necessity has arisen for land out of the question of settling soldiers. The point raised by Mr. Mills in regard to the value of the land that will be available for settlement either by repurchase or otherwise, will be answered by this classification. Some hon. member made reference to the "squatter princes," but I think the remarks have been sufficiently answered by Mr. Miles. We all deeply regret the confusion that so frequently occurs between the names of Mr. Mills and Mr. Miles. I have been trying to discover a remedy, but the only one that suggests itself to me is that we should have to choose between the confusion or the loss of one of those hon. members. It would be better that confusion should be worse confounded than that we should adopt the other alternative. Reference has been made by Mr. Mills to the protection of soldiers against creditors. There is no such provision in this measure. If such protection is to be afforded, I agree with Mr. Kingsmill that it should be a matter for the amendment of the Bankruptcy Act and not one for inclusion in this Bill, because obviously if anything of the kind is to be applied to soldiers, it must not be applied to soldiers under the Land Settlement Scheme alone. Mr. Kingsmill made reference to the personnel of the board and expressed the hope that Mr. William Paterson would find a place on it.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: I was only using him as a type.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not think the hon. member could have offered a better illustration. It would be a fine thing for this State if we had more men of that type, but so far as Mr. Paterson himself is concerned, I am rather inclined to feel that his services have been too greatly imposed upon in the past. I only hope that it will not be long before that gentleman is able again to return to his activities. I am afraid he is one of those men who works himself to a standstill and I can appreciate the opinion that the hon. member expressed about the matter. Reference has been made to group farming and Lane's "New Australia." I had already expressed some doubt as to the extent to which group settlements could be carried out. Mr. Kingsmill suggested that they might be carried out on the lines of the New Australia movement. I remember hearing an interesting lecture delivered by a man who took part in that settlement and the reason he gave for its failure was that there was only one genuine communist in the whole party and he could not find a spade to suit him.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: One member has asked me to answer two or three ques-

tions regarding a matter which I have already dealt with in the course of my reply. They are as follows:—(1) Can a discharged soldier sell his land, which he has obtained at half price under the Bill, to any person as soon as it becomes freehold? Certainly, he can do what he likes with the land as soon as it becomes freehold. (2) If the soldier has paid 10 years' rent on his land when the Bill becomes law and so reduces the land to half price, will the land be given to him immediately, or will he have to wait another 10 years? I do not know whether the provision in the Bill is as expressive as it might be, but there can be no doubt that, as soon as he has completed his payment, he is entitled to his title. (3) If a soldier has paid more than 10 years' rent will he receive a refund from the Lands Department? I do not know whether the department would be prepared to make him a refund, but I can quite see that there would be a good deal of justice in any such claim made. I will have a ruling given on the point. Mr. Stewart spoke of the necessity for better administration, and expressed a fear that the number of qualified men passed by the board was greatly in excess of the number actually placed. The figures show that the total number of applicants dealt with by the board is 620. The number recommended is 406. The number deferred or rejected on account of inexperience, or for medical reasons, is 85; and the number pending inquiry is 129, a total of 620. Of the 406 recommended, 241 have been settled. A considerable number of those who have been passed by the board and not yet placed are not placed because they have set their minds on blocks in the Yandanooka estate, which have yet to be thrown open. About 50 blocks in the Yandanooka and Harvey estates will be made available during the next week or two, and no doubt when those have been thrown open the proportion of settled men to those recommended will be materially enhanced. The applications for Yandanooka and Harvey will be finalised as quickly as possible.

Hon. H. Stewart: That will still leave about 25 per cent. unplaced.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes. I ask members to recollect what I have said over and over again, namely that it is not an easy matter to settle on the land partially disabled men. The bulk of these men are disabled in some way or other. If they were not they would not be here. I also think it is far more important that the men should be settled satisfactorily than that they should be settled quickly. Of course there should be no undue delay, but a little delay is better than to settle them wrongly. As I interjected when Mr. Ewing was speaking, I do not know anything about the land, but I have lived in agricultural districts for a goodly portion of my life, and I have conceived this idea about the land: that settling on the land is as serious a business as taking a wife. The sage says "Marry in haste and repent at leisure." If a man selects land in haste, there is no question he will have plenty of leisure in which to repent. While the Government may be blamed for not settling these men more quickly, I think if they settle them satisfac-

torily it will be better than hurrying over the matter. If we are to make sure that we have the right land and the right man, it is not to be done in a day. Seeing that we have already settled 75 per cent. of those passed by the board, I think if we can keep up that average there will be in the long run less complaint than if we were to rush them on to the land. The question has been raised of taking security over the chattels. It is not intended to take security over the chattels except when they have been purchased out of money advanced by the Government. This being so, it is questionable whether it is not in the interests of the soldier himself that that security should be taken by the Government. Mr. Sanderson referred to the position as between the State and the Commonwealth, and wanted to know why the Commonwealth was not taking the whole risk. A resolution of the Premiers' Conference in January, 1917, confirmed a resolution passed by a similar conference of Premiers held in Melbourne in February, 1916. That resolution read—

That loans to soldiers for land settlement purposes will be advanced at reasonable rates of interest not exceeding 3½ per cent. in the first year, increasing by one-half per cent. each subsequent year to the full rate of interest at which the money has been raised plus working expenses; the difference between these rates and the cost to the Government of the money, to be borne equally by the State Government and the Federal Government.

And there was this further resolution—

That the Commonwealth Government should agree to provide the necessary money on loan to the different States.

So, what has been done is the outcome of two Premiers' Conferences, one in 1916 and the other in 1917. Mr. Duffell made some remarks regarding the employment of soldiers in clearing. So far as is possible this is being done. Work is being carried on at the Harvey, and wherever possible returned soldiers are obtained to do this work. Preference is given to them. But some classes of clearing work are of a very arduous nature, and probably of the character that returned soldiers are scarcely able to carry out. Although I quite agree with those members who say that no farm of farming is easy work, still we cannot get away from the fact that a man, just after his return from the Front, would not be able to do the hard pioneering work, whereas, if given a chance, as his health improves he may be able to carry on very successfully. Some hon. members suggested that Germany should pay all our war expenses, so that we might have plenty of money for this and other purposes. I do not think any good purpose would be served by inserting in the Bill a clause to that effect. I entirely agree with Mr. Dodd, that the Federal Government, to satisfactorily carry out their obligations, will have to do much more than they have done in the past. Particularly in this State have we been neglected in this and other matters. It is quite true that the war expenditure has been centralised in the other States, and that we have received no benefit whatever from it. Mr. Dodd's reference to the stop-

page of the work at the Naval Base strongly appealed to me. It does seem ridiculous that the work which has been continued all through the war, notwithstanding that it was well known that it could not possibly be completed before the end of the war, should have been stopped directly the war stopped. Had it been stopped at the commencement of the war, there might have been some justification for the stoppage, but to carry it on right through the war without any hope of completing it immediately, and then to stop it directly the war is over and the men are coming back in thousands, does seem exceedingly foolish. I am glad to see the feeling growing amongst members—I am sure it is growing among the people—that Western Australia is not getting a fair deal at the hands of the Federal authorities. In regard to mining, the Government are making provision for additional expenditure under the mining vote, largely with a view to assisting prospecting by returned soldiers. It has been suggested that the board should be the final authority in regard to the making of advances. Members should consider carefully before deciding to turn down an institution like the Agricultural Bank. It may mean some delay, but we must have adequate inquiry, and a little delay is better than making mistakes. The idea of the Government is that the Agricultural Bank, as a medium for making advances, would be economical, and afford a safeguard against the making of mistakes. The case of a returned soldier, Mr. Birrell, has been quoted. In that instance the only reason why the soldier was not settled where he desired to be settled was that the reports showed that the seller of the land wanted more than the land was actually worth. Steps were taken to negotiate with the seller with a view to getting him to reduce his price. I think it will be agreed that it is better to keep a soldier waiting for a time, than that the State should purchase on his behalf any land at a greater price than it is worth. The question of the Osborne Park settlement was referred to, but I have already said it is not the intention of the Government to settle any more men in that way. I do not take the pessimistic view of the labour situation adopted by Mr. Holmes. I am inclined to think that we shall reap a great many advantages from the war. A lot of the mechanical appliances employed during the last four years in the work of destruction will probably be put to work in production in the years to come, and we shall find that, by the use of those agencies, a lesser amount of toil than was necessary in the past will in the future produce far greater results, and in that way we may find many compensations for the war. I do not intend to enter in to the controversy between Mr. Ewing and Mr. Greig. I am inclined to agree with both of them. I agree with Mr. Greig that the Federal tariff is destructive of our primary industries, and I agree with Mr. Ewing that a great deal of harm has been done, and is still being done, by people well acquainted with our land resources crying our lands down, and so depreciating secur-

ities which they ought to be the first people in the world to uphold. Mr. Hickey suggests an amendment in regard to pastoral leases. The effect of putting in the subclause which he suggests would be that land comprised in the pastoral leases might be resumed, not only for the purpose of agricultural settlement, which is the case at present, but enable some of the land to be granted to discharged soldiers as a pastoral lease. The section in the Land Act, 1906, referred to is reprinted in the Consolidated Land Act with its amendments, issued by the Lands Department as Section 5a, and it enables the whole or any part of the land comprised in a pastoral lease to be resumed for agricultural or horticultural settlement, mining, etc. Under the existing law, although land comprised in a pastoral lease must be surrendered whenever required for agricultural purposes, it would not be lawful to resume land in a pastoral lease for the purpose of granting it as a pastoral lease to some other person. Mr. Hickey's amendment would, if embodied in the Bill, enable this to be done in the case of a discharged soldier.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The New South Wales case on this point was settled by the Privy Council.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Mr. Ewing also put forward the first rate idea that the Commonwealth should give money to the State instead of advancing it for this purpose. Of course they should. I wonder if the hon. member has ever heard the interesting story about the Scotsman who lent 2s. to the Jew. When he does hear it, he will hear of the Commonwealth giving something to the States, and not before. In the paper some three days ago the Minister for Defence made the announcement that the Federal Government were going to supplement the war patriotic funds in cases where they were depleted, and where there was no longer any money available for the purpose. That to me was a most interesting statement. Ever since I have been Colonial Secretary I have had the honour of being joint chairman of the war patriotic fund of this State. The people of Western Australia have responded magnificently to every appeal that has been made by this fund. The fund has been carefully administered, with the result that we have been able to carry on from the appeal of 1917 until the end of the present year. Now we have another appeal before the public, which has been responded to in the same generous fashion. We in Western Australia should have enough money to keep our patriotic fund going in order to carry out the obligations we made to our departing soldiers, that their dependants would be looked after according to the scales laid down. In the Eastern States the people are not subscribing to the war patriotic fund, and the Minister for Defence has said, "We recognise that the Commonwealth is not paying enough for the dependants of the soldier; the money provided by the patriotic funds is necessarily depleted, and we will now subscribe to them. We will, however, only do this to the extent that they fall short of their requirements." In West-

ern Australia the people not only find the money with which to pay the dependants of the soldiers from this State, but through the medium of taxation will also have to find it for the Eastern States where the people are not responding to the appeals which have been made.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Separation.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I think it is quite right for the Commonwealth to say that the dependants of the soldiers from the Eastern States shall not suffer because the voluntary funds are falling off, but if the Federal Government are going to do that they should do it on the same basis throughout Australia. If they would assume such responsibilities so far as this State is concerned, the money that we might have at the end of the year, be it a sum of £20,000 or £30,000, could all of it be earmarked for purposes for which it will be badly needed in the future, particularly in connection with the children of soldiers, whether such soldiers have been incapacitated or unfortunately killed. I fail to see why a fund which has been entirely supported in Western Australia from charitable contributions, and in fact entirely maintained from that source, should now be subsidised by the Commonwealth in making good shortages in the Eastern States. I agree with Mr. Ewing that the South-West is the biggest field we have in the State for settlement. He puts forward the suggestion that one Minister should be exclusively employed on this job. So long as Parliament is in session I think each Minister should be exclusively employed in connection with Parliament. I have very little time to do anything else than look after Parliamentary matters, and I am afraid that other Ministers are in the same position. I do not quite follow the hon. member's reference to Tasmania in regard to the abatement of interest for five years. I have here a summary of the whole of the Acts of the different States of the Commonwealth. I do not find in that anything which suggests that Tasmania has abated the interest for a period of five years.

Hon. J. Ewing: It is a half per cent. for the first year.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: There is much in what Mr. Millington said with which I quite agree. He says that the Government must not dodge their responsibilities if private employers do not afford sufficient work for the returned soldiers. In my second reading speech I said it was up to all of us to see that the period of our soldiers' return is not one of unemployment and stagnation. Mr. Miles took exception to the want of action of the Government in not providing any other avenues of repatriation than that of land settlement. I have pointed out before that the Federal Government have assumed the responsibility of doing this. It will be our duty, however, to step in where they fail. At the same time it is primarily their business. Reference has been made to the question of an individual who got a pearling lease, and then sold it and made capital out of it. I was to some extent responsible for that transaction. This returned soldier went to the War Council, which was the body con-

cerned, having since been replaced by the Repatriation Board. He satisfied the War Council of his credentials, and that he could do very well as a pearler, and the Council then asked my department if we could let him have this particular piece of ground. They said, "If you are prepared to back him to that extent we will back him with Federal money from the Repatriation Scheme." I do not think I could have done otherwise than I did. They said they thought he was all right, and proposed to back him if we would let him have the lease. We, therefore, let this man have the lease at £5 although we could have got £40 for it.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: Will there not be provision to prevent that in future?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: There is provision in Clause 25, which will prevent a man from selling his rights in this way. The matter of the War Profits tax only indirectly relates to the Bill. I agree with much that the hon. member has said. In principle the taxation of war profits created by the war is absolutely sound. That is where the whole trouble comes in. Legislators apparently were carried away by the soundness of the principle, and forgot how unjust the incidence might be. I do not agree with Mr. Cunningham that the Queensland system is so much more generous than our own. Let me make a comparison. Suppose a soldier requires in each of the States what we call first class conditional purchase land. In this State he can have it at the maximum price of 15s. an acre. I doubt if he can get it at as reasonable a figure in Queensland, but let us assume that he does. We will assume, too, that he gets the same quality of land, and that it is valued in Queensland at 15s. and valued here at the same figure. In Queensland he pays no rent for the first three years. After that he pays 1½ per cent. on the value of the land as rent for 15 years. At the end of that period the value is re-appraised. He then does not know where he is, and all he knows is that he will never have the freehold and that the land will always be leasehold. In Western Australia he gets the land for 15s. an acre. For the first five years he pays nothing. Under our Land Act the payment of the 15s. may be extended for a period of 30 years. The ordinary selector, therefore, pays a thirtieth in each year, or just over three per cent. The soldier, however, gets his lease at half the amount the ordinary settler pays. He, therefore, pays 1½ per cent. instead of three per cent. He pays the same that the soldier in Queensland pays, but he pays it for the whole period of 30 years and then has his freehold.

Hon. J. Cunningham: That is interest.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is all he pays. The interest and principal are lumped together. We charge no interest on the value of the land, but we spread the purchase price over a period of 30 years.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: The interest and principal are combined.



The COLONIAL SECRETARY: There is no interest. Is there any comparison between the terms? Are not ours far more generous than those in Queensland? There is really no comparison between the two sets of conditions. I venture to say that the inducements we offer in Western Australia in this respect will be far more attractive than those offered in Queensland to the man who wants to settle on the land. Too little attention has been paid in Australia, and far too little in Western Australia, to the partially permanently incapacitated soldier. To my mind this is really the most important repatriation work we have to face. It is one which we are going to suffer most from if we neglect it now. So far as the fit man is concerned, sooner or later he will find his footing in the industries of the country.

Hon. J. Cornell: Or leave.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Or go elsewhere. So far as the permanently incapacitated man is concerned, he is provided for by his war pension.

Hon. J. Cornell: It is not enough.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is not enough, but compared with the pensions which have been paid after any previous war, they are fairly good pensions. That is purely a Commonwealth matter. The permanently partially incapacitated man presents a much more difficult problem than either of these. In England recently there has been established a magazine with the appropriate title of "Reveille," devoted exclusively to the interests of disabled soldiers and sailors. It bases its work on this proposition, that for each man disabled in the war, there is a way to usefulness, a happy niche to be discovered. In his introductory remarks the editor says—

A brave man, now blind, said to us the other day—"The world's attitude to the blind, and the blind man's attitude to himself, has hitherto been formed by the whine of the blind beggar, which by the way meant so many more pennies in the blind man's cap. We know better nowadays. The blind man can be useful and happy." If he can be, so can the rest of the disabled. What men think and believe to be attainable is to be attained.

The first point in which it is essential that a sound view should be established in regard to the treatment of partially disabled men, is the aim of the pension allotted, and on that point there is a great deal of confusion in the public mind. If a man loses an arm, a leg, or an eye or otherwise has permanently impaired his means of livelihood, he gets a certain pension. What is that for? I say emphatically that that pension is not intended to make up his earnings to what would be a fair living wage. It is given to the man as compensation, and a very poor compensation for what he has lost. At every turn of a man's life he will be met with disabilities and disadvantages. He will probably require longer periods of recuperation. There are many ways in which he will be put to inconvenience and expense. If he loses one job he will have additional

difficulty in getting another. For all these things his pension inadequately compensates him. If on the top of that we are to say that his pension is intended to supplement his earnings, so as to bring it up to that which a well man would earn, then we are going to take away his compensation altogether. The economist steps in here and says, "What are you going to do about it? It is unsound to give a 100 per cent. wage to a man of only 60 or 70 per cent. efficiency." And I quite agree with the economist. It is absolutely unsound, and cannot possibly last. In the first flush of patriotic enthusiasm after a war, there may be a great many employers prepared to give the full wage to a man who can only earn half or 60 per cent. of his money. But that would be too insecure a basis for the partially incapacitated man to rest on. The time would undoubtedly come when he would be told, "You are only worth 60 per cent.; you must take that, and your pension must make up the balance." Now, what is the remedy? I say there is only one remedy—to carefully train the disabled man for a job in which he can earn a full wage. There is no other remedy. And that is the policy of the Federal Government, but it is one of the directions in which the Federal Government are moving too slowly, and particularly are they moving too slowly in Western Australia. In England this problem is being tackled on a large scale, and with a great deal of success. There the chief difficulty is that the returned soldier is disinclined to go in for training; and his disinclination there arises from the fact that employment at good wages is so abundant in munition making and that kind of thing. With the end of the war, I suppose, those conditions have altered; but writers on this subject at Home point out how undesirable it is that the permanently, partially incapacitated worker should rush into some job in which he can get full wages only because of the extraordinary demand for labour in that calling, since, when that extraordinary demand drops off, he will find himself only a 60 per cent. efficiency man, whereas if he had been taken straight after his injury, and trained for that occupation in which he would be disqualified to the least possible extent by his disability, he might have become a 100 per cent. efficiency man as far as wage-earning capacity is concerned. Those writers contend, and I think they are right, that the work of training should be commenced immediately—even in the hospital, before a man gives up hope of again playing a full man's part in the affairs of the world. One writer says—

What sort of a land would it be if five or six years hence tens of thousands—

In our case it would be thousands—

injured in this long tragedy are drifting idly amongst us without the anchorage of well paid, permanent, self-respecting work. The system is helpless without a great awakening of the public and through the public, of the disabled men themselves.

Everybody agrees that we owe much to our soldiers. I think it may be safely said that

those who have the most owe the most, because in this struggle everything was at stake, and had we lost we should all have lost all that we have. It was for the prodigal son who had spent his substance in riotous living that the father killed the fatted calf. These our returning sons are not prodigal sons; they are the apple of our eye; they are the pick of our youth; they are the young manhood of this country; they are the men upon whose brains and energy Western Australia and Australia will have to depend during the next 20 years. Whether we look at the matter from the point of view of the interests of the State, or from the point of view of our duty as citizens, we can only come to the same conclusion, that the measure of our admiration and the measure of our gratitude is the only safe measure we can use as to what we ought to do for these men. I am confident that Western Australia will not fall short of her task. Various hon. members have intimated that they intend to place various amendments on the Notice Paper, and for that reason, so that those amendments may be carefully considered, I do not propose to take the Bill into its Committee stage this evening.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### BILL—AGRICULTURAL LANDS PURCHASE ACT AMENDMENT.

##### Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 11th December.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [8.5]: This measure is, in a sense, on all-fours with the last measure we have been dealing with; and many of the remarks that have been made on the last Bill apply also to this Agricultural Lands Purchase Act Amendment Bill. Many of the estates repurchased by the Government in the past have not proved altogether that success which was anticipated at the time of repurchase; and it would be satisfactory to know that the Government are now about to reduce the values placed upon those lands, in order to offer the lands at prices enabling returned soldiers, or in the absence of returned soldiers other settlers, to acquire them. The repurchased estates are situated in favoured areas, and some of them—the large property at Beverley is a case in point—should now be carrying large numbers of settlers. Yandanooka, again, would have proved a far better asset to the State had the Government written off even a large amount of the purchase money and put settlers on the land, instead of allowing it to relapse into a wild state. Now we have the suggestion that other lands should be acquired, and I believe the Government intends to acquire them at better values than estates repurchased in the past. Several members have expressed themselves as desiring that this Bill should contain a provision enabling the Government to acquire lands at an increase of 10 per cent. upon the values placed on them in taxation returns. Such a provision does not find a place in the Bill, although we understand

that the Government propose to acquire somewhat on that basis. However, there is little likelihood of the Government having to exercise a power in that direction, because large numbers of properties throughout the State have already been offered to them. Those offers constitute a mixed blessing. While some of the offers may have sprung from patriotic motives, others result from the desire of the owner to get rid of an estate. However, I am perfectly satisfied the State would do well to acquire a large number of those properties, because there is bound to be a large influx of population to the Australian States after the war has been settled up; and then the Government will be put to it to find sufficient land for the new-comers. Mr. Mills suggested that every returned soldier settler should be provided with 1,000 acres of land. I think every member of this House will be at all times liberal minded to anyone who has fought for the country; but if we consider that there might be a total of 30,000 soldiers returning to our shores and emigrating to Western Australia from Great Britain, it will be recognised that the area needed would be about 30 million acres. With all our vast area, and all our boasted agricultural lands, I fear we should not readily be able to grant that area of land to the soldiers. However generous we may be, we have not the necessary land to enable us to fulfil such an undertaking. Therefore we shall have to do the best we can with the lands available. It was gratifying to learn, in connection with the last Bill, from the Colonial Secretary what the Lands Department have already done in the way of classifying lands within seven miles of existing railways, and what the state of settlement is along those lines. The leader of the House pointed out that of the large area of good land comprised within the limits already classified, very little more than half is cleared. But of course we have to take into consideration that along existing railways there is a large proportion of land that would never be available for clearing and cultivating purposes, and no doubt there is a fairly large area that it would be almost impossible to cultivate. Nevertheless, there are along our agricultural railways good lands which are not being made use of, and it is in that direction we must hope to make available, by resumption if not by free offers to the Government, large tracts of country very suitable for soldier settlement. I do not agree with Mr. Greig's remarks as to men going on the land, because I have seen many men who started with nothing, who were practically wage-earners, succeed on the land. Numbers of men who have worked for me as wages men have done remarkably well on the land, and are now employers of labour. I am satisfied that although to-day the wheat proposition does not look very hopeful—and indeed, from certain remarks in the reports of the Industries Assistance Board one might gather that there is some doubt as to the benefits to be derived from continuing to grow wheat—that our wheat trouble could not have been foreseen when the Industries Assistance Board started out to help all who were growing wheat. In-

deed, in the year 1915 we might almost have said it was a certainty that wheat was going to be a magnificent price, that it was a splendid asset, and that everyone throughout the length and breadth of Australia engaged in wheat growing would earn a satisfactory income. We could not foresee the great destruction which was to result from the lack of shipping. It is the scarcity of freight which has made our wheat of such little value here. But we noticed in the papers a few days ago that there are something like seven million tons of shipping now laid down and when that large amount of shipping is available, I am quite satisfied the freights will speedily be reduced, and we will get back to those conditions which will permit of the wheat we can grow to be placed upon the markets of the world at something like a penny for every shilling it costs us for freight to-day. Where some years ago we were able to charter freights from Fremantle at from 17s. to 22s. a ton, those freights afterwards increased to 200s. a ton. It is easy to see, therefore, why our wheat has become of so little value. If we can soon revert to the lower freights there will be a big future for the man who is growing wheat. I am quite satisfied that we can grow wheat here as cheaply as in any other country. The conditions here are better than those which obtain in most parts of the world. In Canada, for instance, they grow a larger percentage of wheat to the acre, but the difficulties counteract the benefits that they derive from their larger crops and the short distance that they have to convey the wheat to the markets of the world. Then again, I do not think there is any portion of the globe where land can be offered to soldiers in the same satisfactory way that we can offer it in this State. So far as the Government are concerned, it amounts to this: that the land is being given away. The settlers are also financed by the State, and it is only the State that can come in in this matter of financing the land. It is not more than 25 years since land was regarded as being of very little value, and those who were settled on the land found it well-nigh impossible to do anything with it. They could not borrow money with which to develop it. Now things have considerably altered. The assistance which has been given by the Government and by the banks has enabled development to proceed along rapid lines, and we find also now that the land will carry much more stock. It is not so much the money that the soldier settlers will make out of growing wheat as the benefit that will be derived by them from the cultivation of the land, so that it will carry more stock. It will be from the meat and wool that will be produced that the soldier settlers will derive the greatest benefit. Many of those areas in their original state would carry very little stock, but it is satisfactory to know that even to-day the settlement which has taken place in the southern part of the State has resulted in the position that considerably more stock is to be found in the country south of Geraldton than there is in that part of the State north of Geraldton to the Kim-

berleys. The output of wool from the southern districts is of the finest and best quality. That has been proved by recent appraisements. Western Australian wools generally have come out on top; and I am quite satisfied that the cultivation of the land under improved conditions, and with better breeding all round, the stock we have in the State to-day is infinitely better than that which we had ten years ago. Every year we see improvements. I am satisfied that every one of the areas can be satisfactorily settled. The greatest trouble, of course, is in getting those who are anxious to go on the land put in a satisfactory position. But, as the Colonial Secretary has himself remarked, it is as well to hasten slowly. Many young men are so eager to go on the land that they have life-long regrets on account of having taken up areas in the wrong districts, or having taken up that class of country which was not suitable for them. There are some who do not care about machinery. They would prefer to work a farm in the South-West, perhaps growing potatoes or onions, where there would be no necessity for that heavy expenditure on machinery and plant which would be necessary in the eastern districts. It is only after careful consideration that we will ultimately be able to satisfactorily settle people in the localities which will be adapted to the class of farming which they intend to take up. With regard to railway freights some people advocate a reduction and suggest recouping the railways by a tax on unimproved land values. That does not appeal to me, because we would only have to raise revenue in other directions in order to make up for the losses which would ensue to the railways. Those reductions would only be a good excuse for the increase of costs, and we would probably find afterwards that there would be an increase in the land tax to make up for the loss on the railways. Of course that would not matter to those who were running the railways. It seems to me what we want is to get the land close to the railways more closely settled. We should make a good honest attempt to do that, and I am satisfied that the owners of the land will be only too pleased to dispose of many of their properties. A mutual advantage would follow. I own a fair area of land, and it would be infinitely more satisfactory to me to share that with other men rather than to employ them. If they were part owners of that land they would work so much more satisfactorily for themselves than they would for me, if they did not have an interest in it. By everyone adopting that attitude we would be helping one another, and by a greater number owning these areas undoubtedly there would be a far greater output and a larger quantity of produce to be hauled by the railways. That in itself would bring about that reduction in freight which we all hope to see. There are many people who complain that there are too many miles of railway per head of the population. I do not agree with them in that.

The Colonial Secretary: We have too small a population for our mileage of railways.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Undoubtedly. We should build our railways in this State for £1,000 a mile. There are few countries in the world that are able to build railways as cheaply as we should be able to build them. But I doubt whether the Commissioner of Railways or the Works Department really know what our railways have cost. I am satisfied from what I have seen on lines that have been recently constructed that it is almost impossible to arrive at the cost. There have not been any engineering difficulties in connection with the construction of our lines, and therefore they should easily have been built at a very cheap rate. It is only by the construction of cheap railways that we can open up our country, and make a satisfactory show. I am convinced there is a splendid future before this State in regard to the settlement of our land, but of course our greatest trouble is that we have not had a sufficient number of settlers. Wherever we have induced young fellows to embark upon the land, I am satisfied that they have gradually built up homes for themselves. Every tree that they plant, every post they put in, and every little improvement that they make, endears them to the land. Their families grow up around them and they are satisfied to remain where they are, being content with their surroundings—at any rate it always appears to me to be so. They have no desire to flock into the towns. Wherever I go I find that those who are in the towns are invariably dissatisfied with their lot. They do not seem to have the strong attachment for the country that those who actually live in the country possess. And in times of trouble we will find that these people in the towns will be the ones who will rush away and leave us with a reduced population to carry our burdens. So long as a satisfactory hope can be held out to those who are on the land, they will battle along and pull the country out of its difficulties. I am not too keen upon secondary industries, though no doubt they mean population in large centres. Neither am I keen on group holdings for the soldier settlers. I fear that it will be a long time before the soldiers will attempt to take up land because they will be very unsettled and it will be at least two or three years before the last of them is settled on the land. The fact that they have been congregated together in large camps, and that it has not been necessary for them to think for themselves, points to the probability that it will be a considerable time before they agree to go out and tackle this work of developing the land. I hope that many of them will be able to take up pastoral holdings. There are in the North vast areas requiring only closer settlement. There is plenty of room, both in our agricultural areas and in the northern pastoral areas, for many more settlers. By our soldiers becoming part owners and holders of the vast territories up there, they will be helping in the important work of developing our land. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM (North) [S.32]: The Bill ought to have a certain amount of consideration. I listened with at-

tention to the statement of the Colonial Secretary in regard to the classification of lands along the railways. I was very pleased to hear what he had to say, because I must confess that, viewed from a railway carriage, all the way from Bridgetown to Nannine there is not a thousand acres of unused land that I would take at a gift. It is satisfactory to learn that there is, out of sight from the railway but within seven miles of the line, quite a lot of good country. When making that statement, I thought I made myself clear that it was unoccupied and unused land I was referring to. I am of opinion that within a reasonable distance of a railway, it is the duty of those who own the land to make use of it. Therefore I have pleasure in supporting a Bill which will enable the Government to resume unused land along the railways where they deem it necessary. I take it it is not proposed to dispossess people who are making good use of their land, merely to turn it over to others whose success is only problematical. The Bill gives the power, but I take it that power will be used with discrimination. There can be no sense in taking land that is being well used and handing it over to people whose success is problematical.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): There is no likelihood of the Government doing that.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: But it has been done in the past. Take the Avondale estate: It belonged to one of the wealthiest men in the country; it was improved to a high pitch of perfection, and was producing to its maximum capacity. It was at that time that the Government stepped in and repurchased it, with the idea of selling it to people at a price at which they could make a living off the land. The result might have been anticipated—but very little of the land has since been sold. Even the Yandanooka estate was not a wise purchase, because this, again, was held by wealthy men who were vigorously developing it. The Government had to pay something like £140,000 for it, and what has been the effect? They have never been able to sell it. There are two instances of land which was well used being taken away from those using it. It is because of this I so devoutly hope that the powers given in the Bill will be used with discrimination.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): Do you not think the trouble was the ridiculously high price paid for those estates?

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: That is what I am trying to show. In the circumstances the Government had no right to acquire those estate. What is the use of purchasing such land for closer settlement? Let the Government rather acquire land that is not being used. Some months ago, I was thinking over the difficulties of the Railway Department, with its alarmingly decreased revenue, when the point occurred to me that perhaps the best way of restoring the department to a proper footing would be to have made just such a survey as it now appears the Government are having made, and then

to go to the owners and say, "Either you work that land or we resume it. We are not going to have these railways running through your district and no work for them." A popular theory is to tax such lands heavily, but I think a far more equitable method is to resume them. When I was speaking in this strain the other day, Mr. Mills interjected, asking would I hold the same views in regard to leasehold land. Of course I would if they were not being properly used. Leasehold lands, especially those for pastoral purposes, are used right up to the railways. They are fully fenced, water is supplied, and they are heavily stocked.

Hon. J. Mills: What population are they carrying?

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: They are carrying what they are intended to carry, namely, a population of sheep.

Hon. J. Mills: They should be carrying human beings.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: Then why did not you go there?

Hon. J. Mills: I was in it, but I got out again.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: So have I. However, the point is that in the one case the land is being used, while in the other it is not being used. Mr. Mills would have us take land away from one owner and give it to another who wishes to use for the same purpose. However, that is another story, and we shall be able to discuss it on some other occasion. The Bill has two purposes, one being to extend the time in which the soldiers may pay for the land, and the other to give the power to repurchase estates. I am in favour of both, for the reasons I have given. When we come to Clause 14 I may move an amendment somewhat similar to that proposed by Mr. Mills, but not quite to the same purpose. I think the period therein stated should be extended beyond 12 months, because it will give the men an opportunity of taking off their crops and their wool. I think it would be wise to name a certain time of the year, as, say, the 1st March, when all crops are in and all wool is shorn. And not only that, the 1st March would give one time to get in the crop for the succeeding year. In Clause 16 I propose to move an amendment in accordance with the remarks of the leader of the House, who pointed out that we cannot resume an estate of £5,000 and then let the owner retain part of it to the value of £5,000. Even if it came to £7,000 he could take his £5,000 and the other £2,000 would not be worth much. As usual, the Colonial Secretary has seen this point and it has been amended. I think the Bill ought to do a great deal of good. Not only will it have the advantage of giving an opportunity to returned soldiers to be settled, but give additional work to our railways which so much need revenue to make them pay. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair; the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1, 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 4:

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I take it that the amount, if any seller takes payment in inscribed stock, increases to four per cent. at the prescribed rate.

The Colonial Secretary: Yes.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4—Amendment of Section 5:

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 the word "seven" be struck out and "nine" inserted in lieu.

The intention is that there shall be as many as three of these boards in different parts of the State. It is considered it will save expense and also be the means of securing more accurate local knowledge of different districts if there are nine members on the board.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Would the decision of three members be binding on the other six?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The decision of the board is not binding on anyone. It is an advisory board reporting on the value of land. Unless the Minister otherwise directs, three members in any particular locality would form a board to consider any particular offer and report to the Minister.

Hon. E. Rose: I take it that the three members would be representative of the district?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is intended that this shall be the case as far as possible.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: Are these members to be paid?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The position as existing in the present Act is not altered in this respect.

Clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 5 to 9—agreed to.

Clause 10—Rate of interest payable by lessees:

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Provision was made in the first instance that the rate of interest should be one per cent. over and above the capital cost. In another place one per cent. was struck out as it was considered not fair to charge this to a returned soldier, and that the State might well bear the working expenses. The Assembly made the amendment in such a way that the clause now applies not only to returned soldiers, but to everyone, which was not intended. I move an amendment—

That the words "in all cases" be struck out and "in regard to discharged soldiers or dependants" inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move a further amendment—

That in line 5 the words "in regard to discharged soldiers or dependants" be struck out.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I think this will leave it open to anyone to have his rate of interest reduced during the first five years, and that this will not apply to returned soldiers only.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I think the clause will be quite clear that the concession will only apply to returned soldiers.

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

Clause 11—agreed to.

Clause 12—Power to clear land compulsorily for the settlement of discharged soldiers:

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 the word "private" be struck out.

I do not think it is fair to bind the Government in this way. I think they should be able to buy pastoral holdings or any other class of property.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: As regards C.P. land, any individual holder is limited to, I think, 1,000 acres first and 1,000 acres second. In the Queensland Act the Government are not empowered to acquire land compulsorily except where the land is upwards of the value of £20,000. In this State we have reduced that minimum to the comparatively small figure of £5,000, and the only effect, so far as I see, that the hon. member's amendment might have, would be that a man with an area of private land worth, say, £4,000 unimproved, and with C.P. land worth over £1,000, would be brought within the scope of this measure.

Hon. J. Mills: But then, again, you might be able to acquire pastoral land not compulsorily.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: If provision is required for compulsorily acquiring leasehold land, it should be in a different clause, and perhaps in a different Bill. The Act which we are amending is an Act for compulsorily acquiring freehold. If we think it desirable to set up machinery for the taking back of leaseholds, it seems to me we need a different measure altogether, because different principles would apply. It seems to me rather a mistake to graft these principles on a measure dealing with the acquiring of freeholds.

Hon. J. Mills: The position is altogether different from what I thought. If one cannot acquire C.P. land compulsorily, I would press the amendment.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I hardly agree with the Colonial Secretary's reasoning. We want to set up machinery for the specific purpose of acquiring land on behalf of soldiers, and that is what this clause purposes to do. I shall vote for Mr. Mills's amendment.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: My objection is not to the principle of acquiring leaseholds, but I think the amendment would cause great confusion in the wording of the Act. Surely it would be better to have a separate clause dealing with leaseholds. I suggest the hon. member might have such a clause drafted, and we can consider it at the end of the Bill.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: If the amendment goes to a vote, I shall support it. At the same time I feel satisfied that the Colonial Secretary's suggestion will meet requirements. Perhaps Mr. Mills will frame a new clause as suggested by the leader of the House. The amendment of which I have given notice in connection

with the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Bill will, I believe, meet the difficulty Mr. Mills has in mind.

Hon. H. STEWART: Is it not conceivable that a person might hold a considerable area of C.P. land purchased from others, beyond what he can take up himself?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That could not be done by purchase; only by dummying.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Surely there are the rights of the conditional purchaser to be observed. On the one hand, the Crown sells the land to the purchaser on certain conditions; on the other hand, it is suggested that under this measure there should be a breach of contract on the Government's part. The Crown cannot by Act of Parliament whittle away the C.P. holder's rights.

Hon. J. MILLS: In view of the Colonial Secretary's assurance that he will facilitate my submitting a new clause in this connection, I ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Do I understand that the word "private" in this clause restricts the meaning exclusively to freehold land, and that if a person had both freehold and conditional purchase land, and the Government decided to acquire the freehold, they could not take the conditional purchase?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is the intention of the Bill as it stands; the measure applies only to freehold land. The value of the property which the Government can acquire under the measure, £5,000, is very low as compared with the corresponding value in other States. The effect of including C.P. land in this clause would probably be merely to bring within this measure one or two estates which otherwise would not come within it. In view of the maximum valuation of 15s. per acre, there could be no great proportion of an estate C.P.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I have some freehold land, adjoining which I have several thousand acres of C.P. land. If the Government resumed the freehold, the C.P. would be useless to me.

Hon. J. Mills: Clause 17 would compel the Government to take the whole.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Yes; but this clause prevents the Government from taking the whole.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That the following be added to the proviso to Subclause (1): "unless in the opinion of the Minister it is necessary for the better and more economical subdivision of any Crown land, including land acquired under the principal Act, to acquire adjoining private land."

I do not wish the Committee to agree to this amendment without understanding exactly what it is. The provision is one I should regard as very dangerous, but, on the other hand, as very wise if one felt inclined to trust absolutely the people who are going to make use of it. The Crown might have land, either present Crown lands or else lands they might acquire under this Bill, in the case of

which it would be found that by the acquisition of portion of an adjoining estate the Government's property could be much better subdivided. But the adjoining estate might be worth less than \$5,000. If the persons entrusted with the administration of this addition to the proviso acted with the extremest care, no injustice or injury would result. On the other hand it is a provision that may be abused, and it may be contended that in such a case the owner of adjoining land, being a person who owns less than \$5,000 worth, might be relied upon to be reasonable and sell his property. Personally I am inclined to think that the proviso will improve the Bill.

Hon. J. MILLS: I intend to support the proviso, because I consider that by this means only the Government will be able to compulsorily acquire any small piece of land to complete an adjoining area.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: Do I understand the proviso means that provided one block is not of the value of \$5,000 the addition of the adjoining pieces may be acquired to bring it up to that value?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The idea is that small areas may be taken so that a block may be squared up.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: We shall be squaring up land purchased or acquired, but what effect will this have on the small holder from whom the block has been taken? It is proposed to take whatever block is required and in that way we may ruin the owner by leaving him with that which will not be of much use to him. Why not take the whole lot?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Of course the provision will have to be exercised with discrimination, otherwise it will inflict a hardship.

Hon. J. Cornell: Apparently the proposition is loaded, and may go off at either end.

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

Clause 13—Inquiry by board and report:

Hon. E. M. CLARKE: Clause 4 sets out that seven shall constitute the board, and Clause 13 defines the duties of the board. It should be stated what will constitute a quorum.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The words in Clause 4 which it is proposed to add to Section 5 of the principal Act provide that unless the Minister shall otherwise direct, not more than three members shall act for the purpose of reporting on any offer of land.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 14—Land may be taken compulsorily:

Hon. J. MILLS: I move an amendment—

That in line 5 of the proviso, after the word "board," the words "for a period not exceeding twelve months" be added.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I do not see why these words should be put in. The owner is not required to give up possession until the expiration of six months, but by mutual arrangement the board may extend the time.

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

Clause 15—agreed to.

Clause 16—Right of owner to retain part:

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That in line 6 the word "five" be struck out and "three" inserted in lieu.

This is to bring the clause into line with an amendment carried in another place.

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

Clauses 17 to 24—agreed to.

[The Deputy President resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

## BILL—GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

### Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [9.30] in moving the second reading said: I appreciate the difficulties of my position, arising out of the fact that certain members have already committed themselves to an hostile attitude. I realise that it must be very difficult for me to convince them against their will. I can only ask them to remove all prejudices from their minds and to consider the Bill on its merits. It has been suggested that the Bill it intended as an attack upon the present administration of the Railways. The Government are asked, "Are you going to demonstrate that the present administration is unsound? If not, why alter it?" That is not exactly the position. The position is that the term of the present Commissioner has come to an end, that we are in a favourable situation for considering whether the Railways can be best managed by one Commissioner or by three. Consequently, it is no reflection on the present holder of the office, no reflection on the past administration of the Railways. The office is about to become vacant, and it is the one time in the history of the railway system when we can without prejudice consider this question of whether the Railways can best be run by one Commissioner or by three. That is the point to which I ask hon. members to apply themselves. I have to face two classes of opposition that might be considered mutually destructive of each other, but which, I am afraid, unless I can induce hon. members to alter their minds, may, instead, be destructive to the Bill. One set of opponents says that in view of the present financial position the Government are not justified in increasing the administrative costs by paying three Commissioners instead of one. Another set of opponents says "For the management of a great concern like this, \$5,000 a year is not too much, probably not enough, but we think that one man ought to get it instead of three." And they oppose the Bill for that reason. There we have two sets of opponents whose arguments ought to be mutually destructive, but instead of their destroying each other, the danger is they may lean together in an effort to destroy the Bill. The principle of railway management by a single Commissioner was enacted in 1903. The first Commissioner was the present Minister for Works, who occupied the office from

1902 to 1907. Mr. Short, the present Commissioner, was appointed in 1907 at a salary of £1,500 per annum. In 1913 Mr. Short's duties were extended to embrace the control of the tramway system, which, in the previous year, had been taken over by the Government. His salary was increased to £2,000 per annum, and he was recommended for a further term of seven years. That term expired on the 30th June in the present year.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: It was for a further term of five years.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes. The mistake has been made in my notes. That further period of five years expired on the 30th June, 1918. It was then decided by the Government that the office of the present Commissioner should not be extended for a further period of five years. This decision was not come to in any spirit of hostility to Mr. Short. It was not because the Government did not appreciate his services, not because the Government did not think he had done well for the State. His connection with the Railways has been a long and honourable one. He was for a period of some eight years with the Great Southern Railway Co., before that service was acquired by the Government. He was then Chief Traffic Manager for the State Railways for 11 years, and since then he has been Commissioner for over 10 years, or in all he has had a period of nearly 30 years' service in connection with Western Australian railways, a long and honourable record. But the Government feel that Mr. Short is getting up in years. His life has been a strenuous one, and his health is not all that is considered necessary in a man with such arduous duties to perform. Consequently the Government have thought that it is not in the interests of the State that he should be appointed for a further period of five years. They do feel, however, that he deserves every credit for the energy with which he has conducted the affairs of the Railways, and that he is entitled to generous treatment. He is to leave shortly on long service leave, to which he is entitled. The conditions of his retirement have been determined upon, and whilst perhaps they are not the conditions which the Government, if they had plenty of money behind them, might be inclined to give, I think they are such as to acquit the Government of treating Mr. Short in a niggardly fashion; to acquit the Government of any suggestion that they do not properly appreciate his services.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: When does he finish up?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: At the end of the year. He will then go on long service leave.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: Has he that in writing?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: As far as I know, yes.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: He had not a few weeks ago.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Probably not. The whole of the conditions under which he is being retired have been decided upon and communicated to him. At the end of his period of leave he will have a pension. The

importance of the railways and their relationship to the development of the State, and also to our financial position, can scarcely be overrated. A glance at the summary of revenue estimates shows that out of a total revenue of £4,023,000 the earnings of the railways furnish £1,828,000, or nearly one-half. That alone is evidence of the great importance of the railways from the financial view. In his latest report the Commissioner stated the reasons for the present financial position of the railways. I propose to refer to only two paragraphs of that report. The first is as follows:—

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 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.

The second paragraph is as follows:—

I have no desire to appear pessimistic in regard to our railways; in fact up to 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 extended 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.

I think the Commissioner is quite justified in putting up those reasons—they are not excuses—for the present position of our railway finances, and I merely quote them to indicate to the House the vital importance of having the best possible management for our railways.

Hon. J. Duffell: Does he state the same reasons as applying to the reduced service on the metropolitan lines?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I dare say there is some reference to that in the report. The point I want hon. members to realise is that the Commissioner's period of office has expired, and we are now in the position that we can do whatever Parliament desires in this matter. It is of supreme importance that Parliament shall decide wisely as to the best method of managing our railways, as to whether it is by one Commissioner or three. I can only ask that members approach this question with perfectly open minds. In 1903 a proposal for the appointment of three Commissioners was made, the James Government introducing a Bill for the purpose. At that time the capital expenditure on our railways was only eight millions, or less than one-half of what it is at present. Mr. George was then Commissioner. He had been in office only about three months, and the clause providing



for three Commissioners was rejected in the Assembly, chiefly on the contention that, as the new Commissioner had been only three months in office, he should be given a fair trial. Since then the proposal has not been revived in the form of a legislative enactment. At that time the railway mileage of the State was 1,500 miles. Now it is approximately 3,500. The capital invested has increased from eight millions to 17 millions, and the mileage from 1,500 to 3,500 miles. If in these circumstances there was then any justification for the proposal to have three Commissioners, surely the case is infinitely stronger now. Most of the extensions are in the outback country, and to my mind one of the strongest arguments in favour of the appointment of three Commissioners is that it is practically impossible for one Commissioner to get over the whole of the system.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: He could not do it, if only for the reason that on a lot of the lines trains do not run often enough.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: From Albany to Meekatharra the distance is 1,000 miles, and from Laverton to Meekatharra it is 1,200 miles. One Commissioner cannot possibly cover the whole system. Long absences from his office would be involved. I believe that frequent inspection by someone in high authority would be for the good of our Railways. "Things seen are mightier than things heard." In my experience, if I have any point to decide, and if it is at all possible to get out, I go and see things for myself. If we had three Commissioners I see no reason why one of them, not necessarily the same one, should not spend his time travelling continuously over the railway system. If he did that he would see the defects that from time to time make themselves patent even to the ordinary traveller, and would be in a far stronger position to remedy those defects than any ordinary official can be. Seeing that we have this enormous system of railways, it is clear that inspections by one Commissioner must be rare and perfunctory. Given three Commissioners, there is no reason why there should not be one or other of those Commissioners travelling continuously from one end of the system to the other. Then again, we have to remember that, in addition to the capital of our railways having doubled, in addition to the mileage having increased from 1,500 to 3,500 miles, two other important departments have been added to the work of the Commissioner of Railways. One is the tramways, with a mileage of 36 miles, a capital cost of £592,000, a revenue of £155,000 and an estimated expenditure for this year of £110,370. This is a big department in itself. Then there is the Electrical Supply Department. Here a sum of £370,000 has been expended up to the present, and there is more to follow. Here is another big department tacked on to the work of the Railway Commissioner. It was in 1903, when the proposition was first put forward that there should be three Commissioners and when it was turned down merely because the then holder of the office had only been there for a period of six months, and it was thought he had not had a sufficiently long

trial. The total mileage in that year of our railways was 1,500 miles, and the capital expenditure was £3,000,000. To-day we have 3,500 miles and a capital expenditure of £17,000,000. The expenditure of the Tramway Department is over half a million, we have 36 miles of tramways, and the revenue is £135,000. There is also the new electrical supply department with a capital expenditure that will probably be not far short of half a million pounds, a grand total of £18,000,000. Can it be seriously contended that, for the administration of assets worth £18,000,000, the revenue from which amounts to one-half the total revenue of the State, salaries aggregating £5,000 are too much for the management of such a concern? I do not think such a contention is tenable for a moment, but I am afraid it may influence some members in voting against the Bill. As to the proposition that we should pay this £5,000 and get one man, I have two objections to the course suggested. One is that in any case the job is too big for one man to perform. The other objection is that super men do not grow on trees. We may search the world over before we get a man so far in excess of the ability of other men that he would himself be worth £5,000, as against three men, one at a salary of £2,000 and the other two at salaries at £1,500 as proposed by this Bill.

Hon. H. Stewart: There are men in private companies in Australia drawing double that salary.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That may be so. What I am afraid of is that if this Bill is rejected, we may find our railways still run—I do not say this in disparagement of Mr. Short—by a £1,500 or £2,000 a year man.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Why?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: This Bill, if rejected, will be rejected not because members thought we should have one Commissioner at £5,000, but because some thought that and voted against the Bill, and others thought we should not increase the administrative expenses and therefore voted against the Bill. If we want to get good management of our railways, and we agree that £5,000 is not too much to pay for that, I believe we should get better results by having three men, as is proposed here, than if we try to get one man at £5,000 a year. The proposed remuneration is £2,000 to the chairman, and £1,500 for each of the other two members of the Commission. The Bill contains provisions relating to the administration which are not in the original Act of 1904, but became necessary in view of the proposal to appoint three Commissioners. One of the provisions is that two of the three Commissioners shall form a quorum. The other provision is of considerable importance and may give rise to a good deal of discussion. It refers to the decision given by the chairman. In some of the States the majority of Commissioners rules, but in Victoria the principle is adopted 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 24 hours, and if then the junior Commissioners are un-

able to agree, the chairman's decision shall prevail. The chairman shall then enter in the minutes the reasons for coming to the conclusion he did, and shall forward them to the Minister for presentation to Parliament. I think the provision is one in favour of which a good deal may be said. It is intended that the chairman should be the chief Commissioner, and that the other two shall be in some measure subordinate to him. In Victoria three Commissioners were tried some years ago, but after trial the system of one Commissioner was reverted to. A Royal Commission was appointed to go into the workings of the railways generally, and that commission, after exhaustive inquiry, recommended that they should go back to the system of three Commissioners. Three Commissioners were then appointed, and the practice has been maintained ever since except that at present there is a vacancy for one Commissioner. It has been argued that one Commissioner would have the assistance of permanent officers of the department to do all those things which I have suggested the Commissioner himself cannot do. My objection to that is that for these things there should be men in higher authority than any officer under the Commissioner can be. It may also be fairly contended that the responsibility in itself is a very big thing to cast upon one man. I think a Commission composed of three men would be stronger than a single Commissioner from many points of view. That at all events is an argument which appeals very strongly to me. It is a big thing to ask one man to carry all the many responsibilities which arise in connection with the administration of the railways. I believe that three men would bear the responsibility very much better, and that their deliberations would result in the better business management of the railways. I do not think the question of expense is worth consideration. No member could say, if he agreed to three Commissioners being better than one, that the extra £3,000 was here or there, in a concern employing a capital of 18 millions of money, and the earnings of which amounted to one-half the total revenue of the State. Hon. members must agree that the slightest improvement in management would save the two or three additional thousand pounds a year over and over again.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: How many Commissioners are there in South Australia?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Although there are many clauses in the Bill, it contains only the one principle, that is the principle of three Commissioners as against that of one Commissioner, and as to what is to be done in regard to the vote of the chairman. The other clauses have been lifted out of Part 3 of the Railways Act in order to save technicalities.

Hon. J. Cornell: The salaries by an amendment in another place are now an annual appropriation.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I would like to give members the position so far as the different railways in the other States are concerned. For the Commonwealth railways there is an Engineer-in-chief at a salary of £1,800

a year. That, at all events, was the position some months ago when the Bill was first introduced. Since then I believe he has been appointed Commissioner of Railways, but I do not know his salary. In New South Wales there is a chief Commissioner drawing a salary of £3,000 a year, with two assistants each getting £1,500 a year. The mileage there is 4,188, not very much in excess of our own, although the traffic is heavier there. In Queensland there is a Commissioner of Railways receiving a salary of £2,250 a year, and two deputy Commissioners, one at £1,500 a year and the other at £950.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: They lost one million pounds last year.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: In South Australia at present there is an acting Commissioner who receives a salary of £1,250. The total mileage in operation is 2,180. From the point of view of railway management, South Australia is very simple as compared with us in this State. They have a mileage there of 2,186 as compared with ours of 3,500. They have a very much bigger population in South Australia than we have. The difficulty of our railway system is that our population is not yet big enough for the extent of the service. South Australia, with its much shorter mileage and much greater population presents a far easier railway problem to face than our railways do here. In South Australia, too, the metropolitan tramway system, which is very much akin to our own here, is managed by a board with which the Commissioner of Railways has nothing to do. The Commissioner of Railways in South Australia has a very much easier job than has our Commissioner here. In Tasmania they have a general manager. I take it the power in that State rests more with the Minister than it does with the general manager, who has not the status of a Commissioner. The railway mileage of Tasmania is only 562, and the salary of the general manager is £1,200. There, again, I have no doubt the manager has a soft job as compared with that of our Commissioner here. In Victoria the railway mileage is not much greater than ours, being 4,100, although they have infinitely more business than we have because of the larger population. They have a chairman at a salary of £2,500 and two assistant Commissioners, although I believe at the moment one of the offices is vacant. In Western Australia we have only one Commissioner at £2,000 a year. I have not the slightest doubt that our position is far more nearly comparable to Victoria and New South Wales, that is in the volume of work to be done, than to South Australia and Tasmania. The contention that one Commissioner is sufficient in South Australia and Tasmania is not conclusive evidence on the point that one Commissioner should be sufficient in Western Australia. In view of the other activities which have been associated with the position I say that the responsibility of the Commissioner here is as great as it is in New South Wales and Victoria. If the experience has proved there, as seems to have been shown by the inquiries of the Royal Commission, that

three Commissioners are advisable, I think the same thing can fairly be said of Western Australia. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES (North) [9.43]: It is customary when the leader of the House introduces a Bill like this for some member to move the adjournment of the debate. I propose to adopt another procedure. I think the House should deal with this Bill in a short, sharp, and shiny manner. I have heard the leader of the House on a good many occasions, both in the seat he now occupies, and in the seat he occupied elsewhere, and I have wonderful admiration for the manner in which he can put up a case to the House. It would appear that to-night he has no case at all, and that he has failed to put up any convincing argument such as he generally does. He rightly tells us that the power sought in this Bill is as to whether three Commissioners should be appointed instead of one, and that apart from this the other clauses are of a machinery nature only. Consequently, all that is necessary to do is to confine one's remarks to the proposal of three Commissioners. If we condemn that part of the Bill there is only one fate left for it, the fate it deserves, and that is that it shall go out on second reading. I have followed the debate in another place and the remarks of the leader of the House here. I cannot find one single argument in favour of the proposal for three Commissioners. What did the leader of the House say in his opening? He said the importance of the railways demanded that there should be some Commissioner other than Mr. Short in charge of them.

The Colonial Secretary: No; I did not say that.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The hon. gentleman said that the reasons why Mr. Short was not re-appointed were that he was up in years, and that the railways were a big undertaking. Therefore, he said, it was not wise to retain Mr. Short.

Hon. J. Cornell: He is a sick man.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The present Government, when they were out to obtain office two years ago, criticised the Wilson Government for not having dealt with the railway problem. They declared that the one great department to be tackled and reorganised was the big spending and earning department of the railways. They came in to put the Railway Department on a proper basis. Eighteen months have expired, and what do we find? Nothing done. It is only what we expect, and it is only what we get, from these men. Nothing has been done, and nothing was intended to be done except the shifting of the responsibility for railway administration off the shoulders of the Government on to the shoulders of members of this House. I do not believe that the members of the present Government ever hoped this House would pass this Bill. I do not think that if they had had any such hope they would ever have introduced the Bill. If they had had such a hope, they would have taken steps to tell us the qualifications of the three Com-

missioners to be appointed. Is one to be an expert business man, another an expert traffic man, and the third an expert mechanical engineer? If so, what becomes of the present Chief Traffic Manager and the present Chief Mechanical Engineer? Are they to be reappointed? Surely the House is entitled to that information. Are the present Chief Traffic Manager and the present Chief Mechanical Engineer to be appointed Commissioners? If so, where is the difference? Will these two men do better work as Commissioners than respectively as Chief Traffic Manager and Chief Mechanical Engineer? If the alteration of title will have the desired effect upon railway revenue and expenditure, I am prepared to agree to the alteration of title. But we have nothing from the Minister as to whether these men are doing good service and are to be appointed Commissioners, or whether they are to go out of the service, to make room for some person or persons unknown. Assuming that these gentlemen are to be appointed Commissioners—I am not saying anything against their qualifications; being in the service they are more entitled to the appointments than are persons outside—what will be the effect? If they do not possess the necessary qualifications for the positions they now hold, there is nothing for it but that they should go out of the service. Then, who is to be the Chief Commissioner? I would like the leader of the House, when replying, to tell us whether the Government have in view any one, or any two, or any three men.

The Colonial Secretary: No. I will tell you that now.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Here we have in the middle of December the head of the most important earning and spending department of the State going out of office at the end of the year, and nothing done to provide one successor or two or three successors. Surely that fact lends point to the remark I made a few minutes ago, that nothing is done and that nothing is likely to be done by the present Government, and that the sole object of this Bill is to enable Ministers to shuffle their responsibility for railway administration from their own shoulders to the shoulders of members of this House. One reason suggested for the appointment of three Commissioners is that they shall travel from one end of the system to the other. There will be some difficulty in completing that journey, since on some lines trains run twice a week and on some once a month. By the time the Chief Commissioner has got round all the system, as it is proposed he should do, he will not have much time for office administration. But, as is clear from the custom in the past, if one Commissioner travels round the system, all three will travel round together, because the Chief Traffic Manager knows nothing about the work of the Chief Mechanical Engineer, and vice versa. The only effect of passing this Bill would be that we would have three Commissioners travelling round the country, instead of one Commissioner with the Chief Traffic Manager and the Chief Mechanical Engineer. How are these three Commissioners

travelling over the railways to create any traffic except the traffic of dragging themselves over the lines? The leader of the House referred to what we proposed some years ago. Surely the House and the country will acknowledge that if we go back 10 or 15 years we are going back to a time when we lost our heads and eagerly embarked upon undertakings that we should never have embarked upon, including a Bill for the construction of the Transcontinental railway as far as Kalgoorlie. We were suffering from swelled heads at that stage, and the leader of the House knows it. The fact of his referring back to that period for justification for doing something now, shows that the hon. member had no solid grounds with which to support his case. We learn that Mr. Short has been about 30 years in the service, and that after 30 years' service Mr. Short is likely to leave the service at the end of this month. I do not know whether Mr. Short has had that information conveyed to him.

The Colonial Secretary: Oh, yes!

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Will the hon. gentleman tell the House when that information was conveyed to Mr. Short?

The Colonial Secretary: Some time ago.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: If only within the last few days, surely it is pretty harsh treatment for a man after 30 years' service to be told in the middle of December that he finally finishes on the 31st December.

The Colonial Secretary: Mr. Short was told six months ago. There has been no harsh treatment. Mr. Short's term of office expired on the 30th June this year, and we then asked him to continue till the end of December. The understanding was definite then.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: That brings me back to the position that Mr. Short's term of office expired on the 30th June this year, at which date the present Government had been 12 months in office. Prior to the 30th June of this year they decided that Mr. Short's engagement was not to be renewed. Having come to that decision, without any reference to this House whatsoever, the Government should straight away have set out to secure the services of one Commissioner to take Mr. Short's place. To leave Mr. Short there for six months longer was fair to neither Mr. Short nor the country. Here was the great railway problem that was to be solved, and the Government came to the decision that Mr. Short was not to be reappointed, but shortly afterwards they came to a decision to allow Mr. Short to remain in office for six months longer. But Mr. Short has remained in office and the Government are no further ahead than they were when they made that arrangement with Mr. Short. It is unfair to Mr. Short to keep him there in suspense. It is unfair to the country to have had the railway service held up ever since then. I have every reason to admire what Mr. Short has done under difficult circumstances. But Mr. Short could not since the 30th June last start out upon anything new, upon any re-organisation of the service, or to give effect to what he considered should be done, because in doing so he was likely to tie the hands and

embarrass the actions of his successor. Now let me point out the business way to proceed in a proposition of this kind, though of course I shall be told that business is one thing and railway administration another. The sooner we recognise that the railways should be run on business lines and not on political lines, the sooner we shall turn the tide from insolvency to solvency. Assuming for the moment that the railways are a business concern, then the proper way to deal with the problem, it having once been decided that Mr. Short was not to carry on, was to immediately supplant Mr. Short, immediately to put a successor into Mr. Short's position, under an agreement for five years—which I understand is the term. Then the new Commissioner should be started out with a new policy to reform. It is railway reform that the people of this country want. The idea of running a business of this kind with three managers is an absurdity.

Hon. A. Sanderson: Hear, hear!

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Bigger concerns than our railway system have been run by managers. If a business man wanted a new manager, he would appoint him; he would not appoint three managers. Then he would say to the manager, "There is the staff; if you can, utilise them; if you cannot utilise them, run this business successfully with another staff. You can appoint the necessary staff." Why did not the Government, when they had decided not to retain Mr. Short, appoint one new Commissioner? After six or twelve months if that Commissioner, with the expert knowledge—and he should be an expert—came along and said he wanted instead of a Chief Traffic Manager and a Mechanical Engineer, two other commissioners, the House would be prepared to listen to the proposal. The suggestion to appoint a commissioner at £2,000 a year and to simultaneously appoint two other commissioners at £1,500 a year, is a proposition that has a political odour about it, and has nothing to indicate that there is any business principle whatever associated with it. The leader of the House suggested that the Bill might be thrown out on the question of expense. I have discussed the matter with a good many members, and I do not think the question of expense was ever raised.

The Colonial Secretary: It was raised in another place.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I would not like to be held responsible for what another place does. What this House is concerned about is an expert to take charge of the railways, and the question of expense does not come into it at all. It is a question of getting the right man and getting him at once. That is what concerns me, and if the Government had lived up to their promises that man would have been secured before the 30th June last, and he would have been ready before now to enter on his duties. In order that there may be no misunderstanding about the railways run on political lines and the railways run on commercial lines, if we get to the Committee stage, which I hope we will not do, I intend to move an amendment which appears on the Notice Paper, with the object

of keeping the railway system free from politics. The amendment is to the effect that no person who is a Minister of the Crown or who has held office as a Minister of the Crown, or who later may hold office as a Minister of the Crown, shall be eligible for appointment as Commissioner. I was at one time the political head of the railways, when the Minister was also Commissioner. I occupied the portfolio for a limited period. Another politician was appointed to succeed me, and he stated on the floor of another place that it took him five years to rectify the mistakes made during my brief administration. If it took one politician a few weeks to upset the railway service, and it took another five years to put the service back to what it was originally, that in itself ought to be sufficient to keep politicians out of the railway service for ever. There are other reasons which could be advanced for opposing the Bill, but I will not discuss the matter any further, because I honestly and firmly believe the Bill will never reach the Committee stage. I intend to vote against the second reading.

Hon. A. SANDERSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [10.20]: We can group three Bills together here, the Railways, the Tramways, and the Electric Works Bills, because if we can once agree on the policy of railway administration we can dismiss the three Bills in one sitting. And do not let us forget that things seen are mightier than things heard. We have that from the leader of the House.

The Colonial Secretary: It is not original.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I hope the Colonial Secretary did not think I was so grossly ignorant as to assume that it was. I was only thankful that we had heard it from the leader of the House "that things seen are mightier than things heard." And because they are mightier than what we have heard, I hope this House will have no hesitation in objecting to the proposal which has been put forward by the leader of the House. We know as much as the leader of the House about our arrangements here. There has not even been a reference to the key of the whole situation. I would ask what is the key of the railway situation in this country. It is like some of those safes where there are two keys, and neither one nor the other can open the safe unless both are present at the same time. I would venture to maintain that the key of the railway situation in this country is first of all the State Parliament, and secondly the Federal Government, and there was not a single reference in the whole of the speech of the leader of the House to the State Parliament or to the Federal Government. Of what assistance is it to us to know that the head of the New South Wales system of railway management is a commissioner who receives £3,000 a year?

Hon. H. Stewart: None at all.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: That is what I was going to say. South Australia does not assist us at all in the consideration of this question. In Tasmania they have a general manager, but in Victoria there is some analogy to the position in Western Australia. That is what the spokesman of the Government told us to-night. Do not let us forget that the total

capital value of the railways is 17 millions sterling. I thought it would be of some assistance to the House and to myself to be able to have a glance at some of the figures in connection with the other railways of the world. It shows how ill equipped we are for the consideration of many of these questions when we find that the commonest book of reference, Whittaker's Almanac, cannot be obtained in this House of Parliament. I speak therefore without the book, but I would refer hon. members to, say, the London and North-Western railway or to the Great Western, or to the American or South American railways, or even to the European railways, to see how they manage their affairs. And without being able to speak with the reference which I had hoped to be able to put before hon. members, I would say that I regard members of Parliament as a board of directors in this country just as I regard the rest of the community as shareholders in our railway system. I am unable to pursue the analogy with accuracy, because I am quite satisfied that many of the railways in England, Europe, and America have a much larger capital than 17 millions. I am unable to give the figures, and I would therefore ask hon. members to regard the general outline of my statement as accurate. In this country, with a proper board of directors—

Hon. H. Stewart: Consultative?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I would ask how our railways system can be satisfactorily managed when a House like this will pass the Esperance Railway Bill. I do not wish to pursue that subject. The key to the situation, so far as the railways are concerned, is in the Parliament of Western Australia. Comparatively speaking, it is immaterial whether we have one, three, or 30 Commissioners of Railways. Personally, I would give my vote in favour of one commissioner, whom I would call a general manager, and if things were conducted as I would wish to see, the policy of the railway system would be in the hands of Parliament. But how can we deal with the situation at the present time? How can we discuss the question of the railway system without reference to the Federal Government; and, as hon. members will have noticed in the speech of the Colonial Secretary when introducing the Bill, there was not a single reference to the Federal Government. Do not let hon. members think this is a reference to the perennial subject of unification. It is dealing wholly and solely with railways. The railway system of this country has been undermined or disorganised by the Federal Government. The Federal Government provide us with the best service in Australia, as far as Kalgoorlie, and then we enter upon the dirty and inefficient system of Western Australia. Anyone who presumes to allude to the railway system in Western Australia without a reference to the Federal Government speaks without a knowledge of the position of affairs at the present day. There can be no question, whether we like it or not, that whatever our opinions may be, sooner or later force of circumstances will compel us to hand over the railway system in this country to the Federal Government.

Hon. J. Ewing: It is a long way off.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Does the hon. member understand the financial position of the country? Does the hon. member know that from 1900 to the present day, that for railways we built in this State, for every machine put into this country, we have paid to the Federal Government 20 per cent., that is to say, we are increasing the capital cost of the railways by 20 per cent. I say the essence of the contract is the Federal Parliament, and probably we should be well advised to enter into negotiations with the Federal Government to consider the question of appointing one Commissioner in connection with the railway system of Western Australia. That is the essence of the contract. If we can take the last speaker as interpreting the views of the House, and in this case I think we can, we shall be well advised to deal with this question on the second reading; and if we vote this Bill out, I think it is what we call in Committee a consequential amendment that the two other Bills shall also disappear. The principle in this discussion, as pointed out by the leader of the House, is are we to have three Commissioners or one? What reasons has the Minister brought forward to induce us to change from the present system to three Commissioners? I should imagine the capital account involved, compared with the Eastern States or with railways in other countries, is comparatively small. I cannot state the capital involved in New South Wales, in Victoria, or in Queensland, but I venture the opinion that in each of those States the railway capital is considerably larger than it is in Western Australia. Then we come to South Australia and Tasmania, where, as the Colonial Secretary told us, the railway systems are managed by one general manager. I should imagine that in South Australia the railways, in their relation to the development of the country, are quite as important as in Western Australia. As for Tasmania, I do not know. But, speaking of pre-war times, I am satisfied that in England and in North and South America the general system of railways was that they had shareholders—the taxpayers here are the shareholders. They had a board of directors. We here may fairly claim to be representatives of the shareholders, and therefore the directors of our railway system. Then they had a general manager who took control of the technical part of the management. Having listened attentively to the leader of the House, I cannot see that we should take away from Parliament the decision on the policy of the railway system, therefore personally I shall be glad to support my hon. friend in rejecting, on the second reading, the Bill before us. And, as I have said, that surely will mean the defeat of the Tramway Act Amendment Bill and of the Government Electric Works Act Amendment Bill. I hope the leader of the House, when replying, will make some public announcement as to the attitude of the Government in regard to the entrance of the Federal railway system into Western Australia. It seems to me incredible that for many months the people of

Western Australia will tolerate the condition under which we have a magnificent railway system to Kalgoorlie and are then expected to enter into the dirty, inefficient, and bankrupt system of Western Australia.

On motion by Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles, debate adjourned.

#### BILL—GOVERNMENT TRAMWAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [10.37] in moving the second reading said: Mr. Sanderson has quite accurately stated that this Bill and the succeeding Bill depend entirely on the fate of the Government Railways Act Amendment Bill. There is no other point involved in these two Bills, and I think it will adequately meet the situation if I formally move the second reading. The motion can then be seconded and the debate adjourned, and the fate of the Bill will be made dependent on that of the Government Railways Act Amendment Bill. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. V. Hamersley debate adjourned.

#### BILL—GOVERNMENT ELECTRIC WORKS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [10.38] in moving the second reading said: Exactly the same condition of affairs applies. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles, debate adjourned.

#### ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [10.39]: Quite early in the afternoon I intimated to the House that at the close of the business I should move that the House at its rising adjourn till 3 o'clock to-morrow. In accordance with that intimation I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till three o'clock to-morrow afternoon.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 10.41 p.m.