

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 17th December, 1918.

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 3.0 p.m., and read prayers.

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

STANDING ORDERS SUSPENSION.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [3.5]: I move—

That for the remainder of the session so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable Bills to be taken through all stages at one sitting and Messages from the Legislative Assembly to be taken into consideration forthwith.

It has always been customary in the last few days of the session to suspend the Standing Orders, principally to avoid delay, particularly in the reception of Messages from another place, which, without this suspension, cannot be taken into consideration until the day after they arrive. It is not my intention to make use of the suspension of the Standing Orders in an endeavour to push anything through. If I did attempt anything of the sort, members would very properly stop me.

Question put and passed.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

- 1, State Children Act Amendment.
Transmitted to the Assembly.
- 2, Dividend Duties Act Amendment.
Passed.

BILL—DISCHARGED SOLDIERS' SETTLEMENT.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1, 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Interpretation:

Hon. J. CORNELL: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of paragraph (a) of the interpretation of "discharged soldier" the words "being or having been a resident of the Commonwealth or the Dominion of New Zealand" be struck out.

It has been held that any person serving in the allied forces should be included in the definition. Viewed from a broad basis, the Bill is more in the nature of a land settlement Bill than of a Bill for the repatriation of soldiers. I have already suggested that not more than ten per cent. of the soldiers who enlisted will avail themselves of the Bill. I am confident that the soldiers who, being other than residents of the Commonwealth or New Zealand, will come to our shores, will be but few. Our chief necessity is population. Therefore I say we should do what we can to attract the soldiers of Great Britain. When the soldiers of the allied countries are no longer barred by

Federal legislation from coming into Australia, then will be the time for them to be brought under the provisions of this class of legislation.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is already provided that the Minister may extend the provisions of this Bill to any person who enlisted as a member of the naval and military forces of the United Kingdom. I would point out that the definition of "discharged soldier" has been arrived at between the Commonwealth and State authorities and that the agreement entered into with regard to the finances is dependent upon that definition. In any other event, I would have been in favour of the hon. member's amendment.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Would not this help be extended by the Commonwealth if the scope of the definition was widened as suggested?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Commonwealth are prepared to assist the States with regard to settling returned Australian soldiers on the land. If one State proposed also to give the same right to soldiers who were not resident in the Commonwealth the Federal authorities might say that that State was obtaining an unfair advantage over the other States; and that they would not assist in that direction. The fact that the Government sympathised with the idea contained in Mr. Cornell's amendment is shown by the proviso to which I have already called attention.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: One does not wish to see excluded from the benefits of this Bill those who are primarily entitled to them. In my opinion the discretion that may be exercised by the Minister goes hardly far enough. This war has created a bond of undying fraternity between the allies who were engaged in it. The provisions contained in this Bill might be extended not only to the forces of the United Kingdom but to those of the countries with which Great Britain was allied in this war.

Hon. J. E. DODD: I sympathise with the object of the amendment, but think we should be establishing a dangerous precedent if we carried it. It is not in order, because it will conflict with the Commonwealth laws. I should like to see some reciprocity brought about between the various allied nations before we go to this extent. The discretionary power referred to by the Colonial Secretary should be sufficient to meet the present case. I suggest that the amendment should be withdrawn.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I, too, wish the hon. member would withdraw his amendment. It would find a more fitting place in a Bill dealing with immigration. We shall at once have to take up this matter, and will have to consider American soldiers as well as those from the United Kingdom. This Bill only deals with returned soldiers of the Commonwealth.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I agree that the provision regarding the discretionary power of the Minister will fully meet the case. If the money is available, I am sure that the Minister will at once exercise his discretion in the right direction.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: The Bill should be confined strictly to Australian soldiers. I agree that it will be establishing a dangerous precedent if we allow it to operate so far as the whole of the British Dominions are concerned.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I cannot see how members of the naval and military forces of the United Kingdom are safeguarded by the proviso referred to. If the money would not be forthcoming from the Commonwealth, how would the Minister get it to assist in this direction? He could only get it by using the funds of the States. It will possibly go abroad that in Western Australia a soldier of the Imperial army can avail himself of the privileges of the Act, the same as a soldier of the Dominion, which will not be the case if the Bill passes as it stands. Mr. Dodd says that he is of the opinion that the amendment will conflict with the Federal laws. If the amendment will do that the proviso will also conflict with the Federal laws. I contend, if my amendment is carried, no person will be able to avail himself of the privileges of the Act until he becomes a resident of the Commonwealth.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I move a further amendment—

That in paragraph (b) the words "being or having been a resident of the Commonwealth" be struck out.

This definition should extend to any person who enlisted for active service, even if he was not permitted to go overseas and was discharged after demobilisation and remained a resident of the Commonwealth.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I cannot see that it will make the least difference whether the words are struck out or allowed to remain. If a person is retained in the Commonwealth, he must be a resident of the Commonwealth.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The effect of the paragraph would be that if a person remained in the Commonwealth until the signing of the armistice and then departed from the Commonwealth, he would in a sense be disqualified.

The Colonial Secretary: It would not have that effect at all.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Then I will withdraw the amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I would draw the Minister's attention to the reference in the various paragraphs, "being or having been a resident of the Commonwealth." Wherever this reference is there is also a reference to the Dominion of New Zealand. In this particular paragraph the words have been omitted. Can the Colonial Secretary explain the reason?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is obvious that a person who was never sent out of the Commonwealth must have been a resident of the Commonwealth.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4—Persons to whom this Act applies:

Hon. J. CORNELL: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of paragraph (c) the word "two" be struck out and "five" inserted in lieu.

The paragraph permits dependants to make application for land within two years after the termination of the war. I think we might well increase the period to five years, but if the Colonial Secretary thinks that "five" would be detrimental, I will not press the amendment.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The hon. member's idea is to be commended. A soldier may leave several dependants, some of them in the infant stage, varying in ages up to, say, 14. The period of five years would give them the opportunity of getting a little capital together so that they might acquire land at a later stage. I would go further than the hon. member and make the period even greater.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Does it not occur to the hon. member that it is rather risky to legislate so far ahead? We are going to create a right shall accrue to some person many years ahead. No one has the remotest idea of the extent to which our land laws may be amended in that period. It is not wise to do this. If it be that two years is too short a time, I offer no objection to a slight extension of the period; but to do as the hon. member suggests, and create rights to accrue 18 years hence, would only lead to confusion.

Hon. J. E. DODD: The amendment moved by Mr. Cornell does not seem to meet what is required. I suggest that a proviso should be added. We do not know when the soldiers are coming back. Unfortunately, the best men will be the last to come back. Then there is another aspect of the question: we have in Perth the widow of a man who won the Victoria Cross. Surely it is only proper that if in the years to come her children desire to take up land under this provision, they should have the right to do so.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I would support that. It seems to me the objection of the Colonial Secretary is the very thing we require to carry out. We should see that those children have that right, whether it be in four years or 14 years' time. Surely the object of the measure is to protect the rights of those children. I quite admit the difficulty, but I think no dependant should be kept out of the privileges.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: The Bill is to provide for the settlement of discharged soldiers on the land. It would be dangerous to extend the privileges for too long a time. No doubt 18 years hence most of the available good land will be occupied.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Some hon. members appear to be under a misapprehension. This restriction of time in regard to the application applies, not to the discharged soldiers, but to their dependants. There is no limit in respect of returned soldiers. The only thing to consider is, should there be a limit in respect of their dependants? I think that, rather than the amendment moved by Mr. Cornell, if the Committee

thinks it is not necessary to limit the time during which a dependant may apply for land, the time limit should be struck out altogether.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I am prepared to withdraw my amendment, in order to allow Mr. Nicholson to move his amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of paragraph (c) the words "during the present war or within two years after the termination thereof" be struck out.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I move an amendment—

That Subclause 2 be struck out.

I dealt fully with this question on the second reading. If the subclause is to remain, the board, if it acted wisely, should first of all deal with the discharges of applicants. I should like to know whether the board, in dealing with those discharges, are going to get from the military authorities the whole of the papers concerning soldiers who do not hold suitable discharges. If the board do not get those papers they will not be in a position to judge of the discharge of the soldier. After the war is over we should wipe out all that has happened in military life and let every man have a fresh start. There are many soldiers holding bad discharges who are more sinned against than sinning.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The clause as it stands contemplates, not that a man because his discharge is bad shall be excluded from the privileges of the Act, but that if his discharge is bad and the board recommends that for that reason he is to be excluded from the privileges, then he is to be so excluded. I do not know that there will be any harm in leaving it at that. Mr. Cornell says that every soldier should be accepted, without question of his discharge. I daresay there is a good deal in that contention. There are many other tests to which the applicants will be subjected, so I do not know that there will be much risk. The only class of man I would exclude would be the man who enlisted without any intention of fighting at all. I understand there have been one or two such men.

Hon. J. Cornell: But how are you to arrive at that? It would be impossible.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I support the amendment, for the reason that the board might interpret this provision more strictly than Parliament intended it should.

Hon. J. Cornell: It cannot get the facts.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: That is so. In most cases it will be found that the men who would be excluded from this Bill would make the best settlers. Their military indiscretions might only be due to their high-spiritedness. The board would surely see that the undesirable settler was not chosen.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: I support the amendment. There were some 80 Western Australian soldiers who recently returned, and

left their ship at Fremantle contrary to orders. Probably these men will not get an honourable discharge. As most of them have been at the Front for four years, they are entitled to all the benefits given under the Bill.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: I consider that this clause deals with a class of men who are heroes. There are those who have fought our enemies, and those who have fought against the ridiculous moss-grown military regulations. It is absurd to put this subclause in. This Bill is not for the purpose of putting lackeys on the land, but of putting settlers on the land. I hope the subclause will be struck out.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Would it not be better to put in the word "if," so as to give the board some discretionary power in the matter?

The Colonial Secretary: That would make the subclause meaningless.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The Commonwealth Government are finding the money and we are making all these regulations. They have not even seen the Bill. Trouble is almost bound to ensue.

Hon. J. E. DODD: I hope the subclause will be struck out. I do not understand how it ever passed another place.

Hon. H. Millington: The majority of members there are conservative.

Hon. J. E. DODD: On the recruiting committee we had a case of a young fellow whose mother could not get the money allotted to her. The mayor of Kalgoorlie was told by the military authorities on her behalf that her son had been sentenced to death, and they wanted him to tell her. I do not know how he could have been sentenced to death. I then saw the authorities, and was told that this was so. Eventually it turned out that the sentence had been commuted to one of two years' imprisonment. The charge against the young fellow was of having been asleep whilst on duty at a hospital. The board, I am afraid, would not grant a block of land to a young fellow of that description.

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

Clause 5—The Board:

Hon. J. CORNELL: No provision has been made as to how the chairman of the board should be elected. It is desirable that the procedure in this respect should be laid down. To this end I move an amendment—

That the following be added to stand as Subclause 3:—"The board shall elect its own chairman from the members thereof."

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: What is the idea of having four members on the board? I see that three are to form a quorum. Has the chairman a casting and deliberate vote? It seems to me better to have five members than four.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not know any special reason for having four members but I think it is a very good number. The proceedings of the board are conducted as described by the regulations.

Clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 6—Duties of board:

Hon. J. CORNELL: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of paragraph (c), after "Act," the words "to conduct a ballot" be inserted.

There may be six applicants for a block of land. The board adjudicates on the qualifications of the men, and fines the issue down to three. It may be that their qualifications are almost equal. I take it the board are not going into minute details. Having got the number down to three, it will devolve on the board to say which of the three shall get the block. It would ensure more satisfaction, in the event of there being more than one applicant, to conduct a ballot.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I can only repeat what I said in replying to the second reading speeches, that if we have a good board, selection by that board will be much better than a haphazard ballot.

Hon. H. STEWART: We notice by the newspaper that there is a floating surplus of 150 men holding qualification certificates to whom land has not yet been allotted, and that there is a number of applicants for each block. If we have the ballot system, it is easily conceivable that one poor man might be dependent on chance for 12 months or perhaps a couple of years.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I believe in the board as being the better method of making a selection. We have a board now which determines these methods, and so far as I am aware they have always given satisfaction, and we can always rely on getting men on a board such as this, who will have the qualifications which will enable them to select the best applicants.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: I am anxious that the board should assume the responsibility. I would sooner trust the board than leave it to the chance of a lottery as to which applicant should receive the land.

Hon. C. P. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): It will be the soundest proposition if the board is allowed to handle this matter. The board would certainly be in the best position to judge who should be the successful applicant.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Hon. members are either misunderstanding me or I am misunderstanding them. The leader of the House is inclined to favour a board. My amendment may not meet the case, but I am prepared to give the board all the power possible to reduce the number of applicants on their own qualifications. Having arrived at that position when there may be more than one, a ballot should then be conducted.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I am inclined to favour the clause as it stands. Here is a case where these people are responsible for the soldiers doing well on the land, and it is only fair they should be in the position to exercise discrimination as to the class of man to whom they should give this land. Mr. Stewart also advanced a good argument that an unfortunate man may have from time to time the ill luck

of not being successful in the ballot and having to wait for 12 months or two years.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: I had not the slightest idea that any notice would be taken of the financial position of the soldier. But there are cases in which it will be necessary for the board to use their discretion. There may be for one block two or more applicants of equal qualifications. Only one can be supplied. Another block becomes available. Naturally, the board would take into consideration the fact that an applicant previously disappointed was a good man, and in all probability would give the second block to him. There are many cases in which a discrimination could be used.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: Some years ago in South Australia I was one among very many applicants for one block of land. The land board decided between us. But the position was very different, because in that case there was not sufficient land for all the applicants, whereas here we have land to spare. Notwithstanding this, I support the amendment because I realise that under the clause as it stands it would be possible for the board to show favouritism. I desire to eliminate that possibility. I am surprised to hear of men in this State wanting land and unable to get it. If the returned soldiers are to take average quality land, it will only be necessary to get a sufficient number of blocks ready for all.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. J. EWING: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of paragraph (d) of Sub-clause 1, the words "to recommend to the Agricultural Bank" be struck out and "to determine" be inserted in lieu.

I think full control should be given to the board. The contention will be offered that this may create a new department. To my mind there is no difficulty at all, because the board must be fully seized of the position and quite capable of determining where advances should be made. I am not afraid that a new department will be created. I do not wish to make any suggestions as to the personnel of the board, except to say that it is realised that Mr. Paterson, of the Agricultural Bank, who has been referred to, is getting on in years and, probably, would not care to take on these duties.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I hope the Committee will not agree to the amendment. It seems to me that the Agricultural Bank, with the experience it has had and the staff it has at its disposal, is in a very favourable position for dealing with advances. It will be an additional security from the point of view of the State, and it will be also in the interests of returned soldiers. Although it may mean a little delay, it will mean greater satisfaction in the end and a protection of the funds of the State.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I hope the amendment will be carried. If we leave the clause as it stands, it will mean that we shall have a banking proposition rather than a proposition for the settlement of discharged soldiers. It will be run on banking lines, and that is not the intention of those who desire that justice

shall be done to the returned soldiers. It will be almost impossible to conduct this scheme on banking lines. I am sure the gentleman who conducts the Agricultural Bank would not be a suitable man for a position on the board. The administration of the scheme should be quite apart from the ordinary rules that cover the business of banking. I will vote for the amendment.

Hon. J. E. DODD: I hope the amendment will be carried, although I fully appreciate the position of the Government in this matter. The Bill is for discharged soldiers and their dependants, and if the Agricultural Bank is to have a final say in regard to the advancing of money, there will be no end of delay. Only a few days ago I gave an instance of a man who applied to the Agricultural Bank, but could get no satisfaction. I saw him again more recently, and still he could not get any result. What is going to take place with the soldiers if they are to be fooled about in this way? It would be dangerous to give the Agricultural Bank the final say in respect of the advances to the soldiers. I am sure the proposed board will administer the provision much more satisfactorily than would the Agricultural Bank.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: I expected the leader of the House would tell us what machinery is to be used for the working of this provision. I am under the impression that this will be a part of the agricultural settlement. I shall have to disagree with the amendment if the soldiers are to come under the control of the present bank inspectors. I do not know whether it is intended to set up a new system under the board, or whether the board is to work in conjunction with the Agricultural Bank inspectors. After all, where does the bank get its information from, but from the man who makes inquiries on the spot? It is a pretty difficult task even with practical men on the spot to know what is going on. Are we going to set up a new control to deal with an odd soldier or two who may settle on the land? Considering that the Agricultural Bank are going to handle this money, I think they should be consulted in the matter. How will the board know what is taking place in the State so far as returned soldiers are concerned unless they have a number of inspectors to supply them with the information? I should say it is better to take advantage of the officers we have and their experience. How far is it intended that the board should work in with the present system of control?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is intended to make the utmost use of the existing institutions. If the amendment is carried, it will be necessary to create a new institution under the board. That will be fraught with the greatest risk so far as the finances are concerned, and very likely lead to the settlement of soldiers hurriedly and unsatisfactorily.

Hon. J. EWING: I think the leader of the House is entirely wrong and that Mr. Millington has not grasped the position. The whole crux of the Bill is in this clause. The board

has to decide what assistance shall be given and what advances shall be made to the applicants, and the money to be expended is loaned by the Federal Government. If a board is created, it will consider only the Discharged Soldiers Bill, and should have the advantage of all the officers in the State Departments, the Agricultural Bank, the Public Works Department and others. All should supply information to the board so that it can arrive at a proper conclusion. Why should it be said that the Agricultural Bank authorities are the only people who should say what assistance shall be given? We are not going to have the assistance given to the returned soldiers that is desired if the matter is left entirely to the Agricultural Bank. I feel sure my amendment would mean no further expense to the State.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): I cannot follow Mr. Ewing in his line of argument. There must be some responsible body handling these securities. It will mean building up another institution on the same lines as the Agricultural Bank if we pass this amendment. The board have all the power asked for already, and will recommend to the Agricultural Bank what assistance shall be given and what advances shall be made.

Hon. J. Ewing: But the Agricultural Bank would decide.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): The Agricultural Bank would be almost sure to follow the recommendations of the board.

Hon. J. Ewing: But they do not.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): Then, there must be some good reason for it. The Agricultural Bank must be concerned in the advances made upon the securities for which they are responsible.

Hon. H. STEWART: The Colonial Secretary might have replied to the statements I made last session and this session in regard to a letter I quoted from the then superintendent of the Repatriation Committee. The Minister for Industries told me that the valuations of farms in the hands of the Agricultural Bank would be brought up to present day valuations, both in the case of ordinary settlers and of returned soldiers. The Agricultural Bank did not act in accordance with the recommendations of Cabinet, and the Colonial Secretary might well inform us what steps have been taken to remedy this position. When the returned soldier applies for a block which has been forfeited and partly reverted to its unimproved state, the bank are not prepared to write it down to the extent that will make it a fair proposition for him. Mr. Camm endeavoured to assist the returned soldier, with the result that he has been put where he cannot cause any trouble. Steps are not being taken to reduce the value of these properties which have gone back. The Premier has told me himself that this is a difficulty with the bank which it had not been possible to overcome. But the Government should find some way of overcoming it. In the absence of a solution, members would be perfectly justified in supporting Mr. Ewing's amendments.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I should be prepared to support the clause as it stands, on the one condition that the accounts are kept separately. As regards putting the affair under the Agricultural Department, has that department proved a success? The Government say, "Leave the matter in the hands of the Agricultural Bank."

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: No. They say, "Leave it to the board."

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The board should be responsible, unless the Government give us the assurance desired. Will the Agricultural Bank keep separate accounts for this affair, and report on it separately? How hon. members can say that they do not want another department set up under the Bill, passes my comprehension: another department, whatever it may be called, is absolutely inevitable. Does Mr. Ewing regard this amendment as of vital importance?

Hon. J. Ewing: Absolutely.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The vital point is, who is going to be responsible for the success or failure of soldier settlement? I support Mr. Ewing's amendment.

Hon. J. E. DODD: The first question is whether, if the board take over the whole control, a new department will be created. Personally I see no necessity whatever for a new department. Mr. Millington raised the point as to inspectors, but the next clause provides for the appointment of inspectors by the Governor. Many inspectors in this State have dual duties. The settlement of our lands seems to be inextricably interwoven with the Agricultural Bank. I think we might have one board to deal with all applications, and that board's decisions should, as far as practicable, be final. The Agricultural Bank would probably set out to ascertain whether the board's recommendations were justified. I earnestly hope the Bill will be altered from its present form, even if that involves redrafting.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: The clause commends itself to me, in spite of Mr. Ewing's remarks. I am quite in accord with his enthusiasm for doing the very best for returned soldiers, and for obtaining finality as quickly as possible, but we must do it systematically. I cannot imagine anything better than the board proposed under this Bill. The board will have full power to inquire into all matters, and to determine which applicant shall have what land. Thereupon the board recommend the applicants to the bank. The bank, Mr. Dodd says, may, after all this trouble taken by the board, turn down the applicants. But does anyone think that the bank would turn down the recommendations of a statutorily appointed board without the very strongest reason? It is necessary that the bank should be attached to this board, because after the board have recommended the money must come from somewhere. In this matter we shall be dealing not only with money coming from the Commonwealth, but also with money belonging to the Agricultural Bank, which is largely State Savings Bank money. I understand the

State proposes to advance beyond the money advanced by the Commonwealth, and therefore the Agricultural Bank must take any necessary precautions. Even after the advance has been made, there are legal matters to be arranged, for which the Agricultural Bank has all the necessary facilities. It seems to me that the system proposed by the Bill is worth at all events a trial. Any other system will necessarily involve the creation of a large new department.

Hon. J. CORNELL: We have reached, as it were, the end of the beaten track. Say the board have decided that certain soldiers shall have certain blocks of land. Then, in order that the soldiers may obtain those blocks, they must have finance, for which they will go to the Agricultural Bank with recommendations from the board. I contend that either the board should assume control all the way, or else the Agricultural Bank.

Hon. J. Ewing: That is the point.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The question is whether the soldier is to look to one commanding officer in this matter, or to two commanding officers. The board will have to rely on some source for information, and the only source from which they can obtain adequate information is the Agricultural Bank and its inspectors. Unless we pass legislation providing that the Agricultural Bank inspectors are to give information to the board direct, the information must come to the board from the Agricultural Bank inspectors through the Agricultural Bank management. It is now for us to say how far a man should be assisted. It will be necessary to recast the clause. It would have been better for the Agricultural Bank to take supreme control. If we are going to have criss-crossing from board to bank there will be dissatisfaction and dissension. It has also been said that Mr. Ewing's amendment will create another department. What if it does?

Hon. R. J. LYNN: I suggest that the clause might be recast. The Agricultural Bank have all the machinery in order to handle the finances, and it would be a pity to create another board to have that same machinery which is in existence already. If the board had that power, the Agricultural Bank would have the necessary machinery to deal with the advances made, but if the bank has the right to veto any recommendation of the board, then we have conflicting interests in two departments, and anyone who has had anything to do with Government departments knows that immediately we start badgering a file from one department to another great delay takes place, and that delay will not only annoy the individual but will cause considerable loss.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: When I moved the second reading, I stated that the Agricultural Bank had cut down both interest and principal in regard to amounts owing on lands under their control. I do not say that the objection raised by Mr. Stewart has no force in it. The sum of £500 will not be sufficient in a majority of cases to satisfactorily settle these men. Mr. Ewing's suggestion is that the board should be untrammelled

in the expenditure of £500, and when it comes to the end of its tether the Agricultural Bank should step in and advance money to the settlers. That is an utterly unsound proposition. The bank should surely have some say before the £500 is spent. If the bank is not to be trusted we should get rid of the institution altogether. In the circumstances the Agricultural Bank has been well administered. The circumstances of the past two or three years have been such that would have compelled losses no matter how a bank had been controlled. The proposal is rather a dangerous one to take up. The directors of the bank are protected to some extent, the members of the board would not be protected. They would be subject to all sorts of pressure, and if their recommendation was to be final we would find in a great many cases that soundness would be sacrificed to haste. There has recently been no conflict between the soldier settlement board and the Agricultural Bank. There was conflict at one time, but that was not surprising in the initiation of the movement. I see no reason to expect a conflict in the future.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: As Mr. Ewing has explained, he wishes to throw the responsibility on the board. So do I. The Government say "We want the Agricultural Bank to have a considerable say in this matter." The leader of the House told us that in the circumstance the Agricultural Bank had been well administered, and had been a success. The fact remains, however, that the bank, since 1914, has been financially embarrassed, and it has farms on its hands.

Hon. V. Hamersley: So has every institution.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Of course, and by giving the soldiers' money over to the control of the Agricultural Bank, will hon. members tell me that the tendency will not be to try and redeem their position with the farms on the bank's books?

Hon. J. Ewing: Of course they would.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: No.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The tendency must be—

Hon. H. Stewart: Has been.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Has been, will be, and must be, if the bank has a property on its books, to endeavour to dispose of it when a man comes along with a cheque for £500.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: There would have to be a recommendation by the board.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Of what value will the recommendation of the board be? Unless the board consists of experts it will simply be the mouthpiece of the Agricultural Bank. But the question is, is it going to be for the benefit of the soldiers? The Colonial Secretary says that in the majority of cases the £500 will not be sufficient. If that is so, surely the proper course is to tell the Federal Government that we want more; not to load ourselves with the extra amount. This is essential to the protection of Western Australia. I will do all in my power to put the whole of the responsibility on the Federal Govern-

ment and on the board, and keep the Agricultural Bank out of it.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: I am still of opinion that it will be a function of this independent board to make a selection of the soldiers suitable for farming. Another thing will be the allotting of farms which the Government consider suitable for soldier settlement. Those functions are all that the board should have to fulfil. The Agricultural Bank has the financing to attend to. I agree with the Colonial Secretary in regard to the Agricultural Bank having the responsibility of financing. The bank has already lent money on farms which will be applied for by soldiers. So, before the soldier starts with the expenditure of the £500, the bank will have advanced perhaps £300 on the farm.

Hon. J. E. Dodd: The bank will be the buyer and the seller too.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: No. The board will approve the soldier, who in turn will be the buyer of the land.

Hon. J. Mills: Where will the board get the information as to the value of the farm?

Hon. J. A. GREIG: The board will not trouble about the value of the farm. It will be for the Government to say that the farm is suitable for soldier settlement. The Agricultural Bank, with its inspectors, will know what farms are suitable and what money to lend. Unless we use those inspectors we shall have to establish a new set of men throughout the country.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: If we want to kill the Bill let us vote for the amendment. In my opinion the duty of the board is to select the soldier; and the board have charge, to the extent that they will recommend advances to be made to the soldier. At that point the bank comes in and takes control. We already have all the machinery for dealing with the matter. The amendment will be the means of creating another department at big expense. The duty of the board is to see that we get the right soldier and to see that the soldier gets the right land. The Agricultural Bank will advance the money, and we must have some Government department to see that the advance is made on decent security. I will support the clause.

Hon. H. STEWART: It is well known that the Agricultural Bank made reductions in the valuations of deteriorated properties 18 months ago. Many of those reductions were not sufficient to enable returned soldiers to go on the land with a chance of achieving success. The board will not only say that a man is qualified, but the board is there to protect the returned soldiers and to see that the conditions of settlement are favourable. The board is in a position to confer with the Agricultural Bank, and no doubt the board members themselves will be capable judges of land. It will be difficult to give the board the necessary responsibility without building up another institution and so failing the make use of the bank and its staff.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I sympathise with the amendment, but I certainly feel that to carry the amendment would be detrimental

to the best interests of the soldiers. If we carry the amendment it will mean that we shall require to constitute a board with full powers and authority, such as the trustees of the Agricultural Bank have at present. The bank can already assist the soldier where he requires assistance beyond the amount allocated for the purpose by the Commonwealth authorities. If the soldier is to be limited to the £500 no doubt, by certain amendments to the Bill, we can vest in the board certain powers, but this would mean re-constructing the Bill, which is impossible during the present session. For the present, in the interests of the soldier, it is better that the clause should be carried as it is at present.

Hon. J. E. DODD: What need is there for the board at all if the arguments used by Mr. Miles are correct? Let us have either a board or the Agricultural Bank. If we are going to limit the powers of the board to such as are set out in the Bill, why have a board? It would be better to extend to the board some of the powers of the Agricultural Bank. We should have either one or the other.

Hon. J. EWING: The board cannot expend any money upon the settlement of our soldiers, whether it is Federal money or not, without the authority of the Agricultural Bank. If we are going to create a board which is to be of some value, then it is necessary to give that board some power. If the amendment is carried, it will, in my opinion, make the Bill and not break it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I said that the hon. member's suggestion was that the board should be given a free hand so far as the £500 from the Commonwealth authorities is concerned, and that then the bank should step in and carry the man on. I said this would be an utterly unsound proposition.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: There is a certain analogous position between this board and that created under the Repatriation Act. The State Repatriation Boards have certain limited duties to perform. If the soldier requires an advance in excess of that which can be given by the State board, it is necessary for that board to refer the matter to the chief board in Melbourne. Nevertheless, the State boards are performing a most useful purpose. If necessary, an amending measure could be brought in later on to deal with the position which has been debated here.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: The idea of the board is that these soldiers shall have a sympathetic and just body to deal with them. If the board is done away with, there will be the same unsympathetic treatment at the hands of the bank which is meted out to other people. The sole idea of the bank is to settle people on their securities which would have been thrown up by other persons. The board should be given the power necessary to decide any disputes as to who shall have a property and whether the property is worth having. They then recommend after inquiry that the £500 should be given to the applicant, and also recommend what particular block the applicant should have.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Sympathy without authority is of very little use.

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

Ayes	6
Noes	18
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Majority against	12
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AYES.

Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. R. J. Lynn
Hon. J. E. Dodd	Hon. H. J. Saunders
Hon. J. W. Kirwan	Hon. J. Ewing
	(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. J. F. Allen	Hon. J. J. Holmes
Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. C. McKenzie
Hon. H. Carson	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. E. M. Clarke	Hon. H. Millington
Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. E. Rose
Hon. J. A. Greig	Hon. H. Stewart
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. J. W. Hickey	Hon. J. Mills
	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I move an amendment—

That in Subclause 2, line 2, the words "any persons" be struck out, and "sub-boards of four persons" inserted in lieu. The powers to be delegated, under paragraphs (a), (b), and (c), are the most important of the board. They are the powers relative to who shall go on whatever land may be available. Therefore, any decision arrived at by a sub-board should not be binding until it has the confirmation of the parent board. I am opposed on principle to delegation of powers, and certainly this delegation ought to be circumscribed. I am not wedded to the proposal that the sub-boards shall be approved by the Minister.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not think there is any need for the amendment, which entirely hinges on the further amendment to be proposed by the hon. member if this one is carried. The sub-board would not have power to make recommendations; moreover, the subclause merely says that the parent board "may" accept and act on the reports of the sub-boards, as they are termed by the hon. member. Again, it is not anticipated that the sub-boards will be permanent institutions.

Hon. J. CORNELL: What are the inquiries to be made by the sub-boards? Are applicants to be called before the sub-boards? If it is anticipated that, owing to the huge extent of the State, the board may be unable to visit certain districts, and that therefore delegation is necessary, still there should be some semblance of order, after the board have created sub-boards throughout the State so as to have some machinery ready to work—machinery in a sense permanent. Even if the amendment is carried, the subclause would not be mandatory on the board, but would merely enable them to create sub-boards throughout the State, thus

establishing organisations available to all applicants.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 7—Officers:

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I move an amendment—

That the following be added to the clause:—“In making all such appointments preference shall be given to discharged soldiers possessed of the necessary qualifications.”

In connection with the Defence Department and the Repatriation Department, complaints are often heard that appointments are filled by men who are not discharged soldiers, although discharged soldiers equally well qualified are available for the position and would carry out the work in a more sympathetic manner.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The amendment is entirely in accordance with the policy of the Government in this matter, and I see no objection whatever to its inclusion in the Bill.

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

Clauses 8, 9—agreed to.

Clause 10—Special provision for settlement of discharged soldiers:

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: I move an amendment—

That the following be added to the clause, to stand as Subclause 4:—“The power of resumption conferred on the Governor by Section 4 of the Land Act Amendment Act, 1906, may be exercised to enable the land so resumed to be disposed of to discharged soldiers for agricultural, grazing, or pastoral purposes.”

The CHAIRMAN: With regard to this amendment, I do not wish to rule it out of order, but if I were asked to do so I am afraid I would be compelled to do so. May I suggest to the hon. member that it would find a better place in the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act Amendment Bill, which is still in the Committee stage.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I think it only fair to say that if the hon. member fell in with your suggestion, Mr. Chairman, I should probably ask you, when he moved the amendment in connection with the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act Amendment Bill, to rule it out of order on the ground that that measure deals with the purchase of land for agricultural purposes.

The CHAIRMAN: In the circumstances, I shall allow the hon. member to move his amendment now.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I understood you, Mr. Chairman, to say that this amendment was out of order. If that be the case, it is no use wasting the time of the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think it is out of order. I thought, however, it would be

better to insert it in another Bill. Standing Order 173 says—

The Title of a Bill shall coincide with the order of leave, and no clause shall be inserted in any such Bill foreign to its Title. I do not think this amendment is foreign to the title.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: This amendment is only aimed at endeavouring to repatriate a large section of our returned soldiers. Whilst the present Act under review aims in the direction of putting our returned soldiers on the land, we have had rather conflicting opinions expressed in that particular direction. Some of the highest authorities have said that in their opinion a small percentage of the men would take advantage of the measure. I hope a large percentage of men will take advantage of it, because I am satisfied they will make good, but there is one section of the community who will have to be provided for, and they, I am sure, can make good if given the opportunity to do so in the direction of settling on pastoral areas. I am satisfied, if reasonable opportunities are given to these men, that they can make good on those areas. It has been pointed out by certain members that there is a great deal of pastoral land in this country that has not been selected. I have endeavoured to find pastoral country for the returned soldiers but I have not succeeded too well. I am only asking that the Government shall have power to resume areas under certain conditions. In a case of this kind we should study the returned soldiers, and as a business proposition the Government should have power to resume areas for closer settlement in the northern parts of the State. Mr. Miles made reference in his speech to the fact that 20,000 acres would not be of much use in the northern portion of the State. I am not going to put myself up as a judge as to how much country is required in the northern parts of the State, but I am going to say that between Mullewa and Peak Hill and possibly further north, 20,000 acres will give a man a decent chance of making good. I will not, however, restrict myself to that area. If a board competent to judge say that 20,000 acres will not give a man a chance, I will reply, “Let him have 50,000 or 100,000 acres.” All I want is that the Government shall have power to resume land if a returned soldier makes an application for it. Mr. Holmes said that there was a lot of country behind the Leopold ranges. That may be.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: It is too far out for returned soldiers.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: An hon. member in another place also referred to the fact that there was land available between Ajana and Carnarvon. I have been over that country too, and it is at present waste.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: There is no water there.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: There is also other country which soldiers could take up with a decent chance of success. Reference has been made to surplus lands. It seems to me a little uncharitable to think that a man should have a million acres and that a re-

turned soldier should not be able to get his little out of what is over. I agree that after those areas have been split up, what remains as surplus land should be reserved for returned soldiers. There are many men walking the streets of the City to-day who are anxious to take up a bit of this country. I am also desirous of seeing that they get some of it, but not at the expense of the man who is holding it to-day. All I want is that the Government shall have power to say that if a man wants a little of that country, he shall apply for it, and that he may be able to get it, and that the owner of that land shall have reasonable compensation. I have no desire that anyone shall be treated harshly. We are not putting the gun at the head of the present holder of the land. I am not in opposition to those who hold that country to-day, but they themselves realise that a lot of that country is not being utilised to the extent it should be. The Government should have power to resume some of that country. It has been said that a man could not exist on 20,000 acres of pastoral country in the North. Possibly that is true in respect of certain parts of the North, but I can say that in other parts 20,000 acres will furnish a decent livelihood. However, I am not restricting the area to 20,000 acres. The returned soldier should be given a chance of getting some of that country without interfering with the interest of the squatters. There are in the State to-day partially disabled soldiers who could do very well in the pastoral industry. I hope the Committee will carry the amendment.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Whilst I entirely agree with your contention, Sir, that the clause is out of place in the Bill, I should have been lacking in candour if I had permitted Mr. Hickey to withdraw his amendment with the idea of inserting it in the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act Amendment Bill, because I have been advised that, whilst it might be merely in its wrong place in this Bill, it would not be at all in order in the other Bill, not being in conformity with the Title of that Bill. A portion of the amendment is already provided for. If it is desired to resume pastoral lands for settlement for agricultural purposes, it can be done under the existing Act. But if it is desired—and this is the crux of the amendment—to resume pastoral leases for settlement for pastoral purposes, then we come up against an entirely new principle, and new and adequate provisions will have to be made for carrying it into effect. In the case of the repurchase of agricultural land for agricultural purposes, we have set out clearly defined lines on which to proceed. I am fully in accord with the contention that if it is legitimate to take away by compulsory purchase freehold land when a man has too much, and to distribute the balance of it amongst soldiers, it is impossible to contend that it would not be a sound principle to resume similar portions of pastoral leases for the purpose of settling them with returned soldiers taking up pastoral pursuits. But before we set out to compulsorily purchase land for agricultural settlement, we set out definite lines on

which we must proceed, and to protect the owner from unfairness. If Parliament desires that similar action shall be taken in regard to pastoral leases, Parliament must set out definite lines on which to proceed, so that there shall be no unfairness in this case. It really means another Bill for the compulsory resumption of leasehold lands for the settlement of soldiers in pastoral pursuits. When we set out to compulsorily resume land from the freeholder we say we cannot touch him unless he has a certain area. So, too, we must provide in regard to the pastoral leaseholder. In the case of agricultural lands we give the owner the right to reserve a certain portion, and we must do the same in regard to the pastoral leaseholder. Also, provision is made that if we decide to take portion of the agricultural land, the owner has the right to say that we must resume the lot. Similar provision will require to be made in respect of the pastoral leaseholder. All these points would have to be considered, and the only way it can be satisfactorily done is by bringing in a separate Bill.

Hon. J. Mills: Are the Government prepared to bring in such a Bill?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Government have had no opportunity of considering the matter. My own opinion is that, whatever justification there is for the compulsory purchasing of freehold land from settlers who have more than they can properly use, all the reasons that apply to that would apply to the compulsory resumption of pastoral leasehold land. Just as, in the matter of repurchasing agricultural land, we have set out definite lines to protect the legitimate interests of the freeholder, so in the case of the pastoral lessee we must go on definite lines. Clearly, it would be altogether unfair to carry out these resumptions under the proposed amendment. It is necessary to put in proper safeguards and proper conditions.

Hon. J. Mills: The leader of the House has made out a fine case for the pastoralist. I do not say he has not had a certain amount of sympathy also for the returned soldier. The land which is near to a railway, say, on the Murchison or in the Gascoyne, where it is suitable for closer settlement, should be utilised for the repatriation of our soldiers. The population is very scanty for 200 or 300 miles on the Murchison. Most of the station holders there own about 500,000 acres of land each. If the 500,000 acre lots were cut up into 20,000 acre blocks, each block would be sufficient for a man to make a good living off at the present price of wool. At present a station of this size is maintaining perhaps a manager, a Chinaman cook, and a couple of men on motor bicycles, but if subdivided as I have suggested, it would be capable of maintaining 125 people. My argument is that we should settle these men on these pastoral areas near to a railway line. Our soldiers should not return here finding that these pastoral lands have been locked up for 30 years, while they were away. I think it is very unfair, and I protest on their behalf. I do not say that the squatters should be deprived of their

rights, but I do say that the men who have fought for us should also have their rights. The day is coming when, if Parliament cannot do justice to these men, their representatives will find their way into Parliament and see that justice is done.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I agree with the Colonial Secretary.

Hon. J. Mills: Naturally.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: If these leases are wanted for the soldier applicants, let them be purchased by the Government.

Hon. J. Mills: And load up the soldier.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: There is nothing to stop the Government from doing this, if they are prepared to pay the price. These things must be done from a legal point of view. I should like to point out some of the difficulties which would face the returned soldier on these lands. I have no hesitation in contradicting Mr. Mills' statement that a man could make a living on 20,000 acres of pastoral country. One or two men have made a success of it in the Murchison during the good seasons of recent years, but that will not always continue. It is impossible to make a new place pay under about seven years. I am certain that any of these returned soldiers who undertook this would find it very expensive. It takes about 22 miles of fencing to enclose 20,000 acres. This, at £30 a mile, would run into £660. Then there is water to be provided, the homestead, stock, and assistance. One cannot get anything out of a holding of this nature under 12 months, when the first clip of wool comes in. If in the first year a drought occurs the man is done for. I have seen men ruined in this country from droughts. It has been impossible to place the sheep on a 40,000-acre paddock. If it is the desire of Parliament to resume these leases this can be done, but the compensation will run into a considerable sum of money.

Hon. J. MILLS: Sir Edward Wittenoom is very discouraging in his remarks, but I do not think he can point to many failures on the Murchison since railway communication was brought into the district. Sheep can be kept successfully on these small areas. I know of a woman who sent to Geraldton recently 42 bales of wool, valued at about £800, from sheep run on 26,000 acres of rough diorite country. The cost of fencing mentioned by Sir Edward Wittenoom is excessive. If the Government resumed these lands they would resume also the fences at their present value, which would vary between £10 and £17 a mile.

The CHAIRMAN: In order to confine the debate within some bounds, I wish to point out that no area is mentioned in the amendment.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is quite true there is no area mentioned in the amendment, but the whole of the pastoral leases are really involved in the amendment. Speaking personally, I am in entire sympathy with the object of the mover. My objection is that if we are going to do this thing—

Hon. A. Sanderson: Is the leader of the House in sympathy with the object of the

mover, speaking as the Government representative?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have already stated that the Government have not considered the matter. I see no reason which would justify the Government in compulsorily repurchasing agricultural land for the settlement of soldiers, that would not apply equally to the compulsory resumption of pastoral leases for that purpose. But anything of that kind should be done in a proper and orderly fashion, and so as to protect the interests of the pastoral lessee in the same way as we have protected those of the holder of agricultural land. There must be no suggestion of confiscation, not even for the benefit of the returned soldier. The amendment would make the clause quite unworkable, because the section of the Act referred to does not apply to anything except the declaration of agricultural areas within a pastoral lease. It may be desirable that where pastoral leases are held in unduly large areas, provision should be made under proper restrictions, that portion of those areas shall be resumed for this purpose.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: I personally appreciate the sympathy of the leader of the House and also the difficulty of putting the amendment, if carried, into operation. But if a thing is right in itself, ways and means should be found to put it into operation. What should operate as regards resumption of agricultural land should operate more extensively as to resumption of pastoral areas. The amendment is intended to give the Government power to resume all pastoral areas, if the Government think fit. The purchase of the areas would cost the State a certain amount of money. I am quite satisfied that that is so, and I would not have moved the motion had I thought otherwise. Men who have made improvements are entitled to the full value of them.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: In common with most members, I have listened for 40 or 50 minutes to this debate, and I must say I am astonished at what we have heard. The leader of the House is in entire sympathy with the amendment.

The Colonial Secretary: No; I am not in sympathy with the amendment.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: With the object of the amendment, then. The object of the amendment is to throw open the pastoral industry of the North to returned soldiers.

Hon. J. W. Hickey: To give the Government power to resume for that purpose.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The Minister says he favours the object of the amendment. If the amendment is rejected, there will be no opportunity of attaining the object of the clause.

The Colonial Secretary: Not except by introducing another Bill.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I thought the object of this Bill was to consider carefully what is required for the returned soldier, and to put it into operation. The pastoral industry of the North, so far as the returned soldier is concerned, this Bill does not touch.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: It will have to be done by a separate Bill.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I will recommend the returned soldier to await that legislation. I shall oppose the amendment on the understanding, which I shall note on my copy of the Bill, that the leader of the House undertakes that the Government will, later, bring in a measure to deal with the pastoral industry.

The Colonial Secretary: You have no justification for making such a note, but I do not care what note you make.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: How the leader of the House can assert that I have no justification for making such a note, I do not understand.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. member says that he has listened with close attention for 45 minutes. During the last five minutes I have indicated twice that I have had no opportunity of consulting the Government on the matter, and therefore cannot speak on their behalf.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: The leader of the House has assured us that he is in sympathy with the object of the amendment, and believes that it should be given effect to; but then he raises insurmountable obstacles. Such an attitude is all very well for people not responsible for running the country, but presumably the Government are responsible for our part of the repatriation scheme. Therefore, we are justified in questioning the leader of the House as to the intentions of the Government in this regard. If the State Government have not thought of it and the Commonwealth Government have not thought of it, some consideration should be given here to this phase of repatriation. If on this occasion the Colonial Secretary cannot speak for the Government, I shall be glad to have his assurance that the matter will receive attention. The present Government seem to think that the object of government is to rush into recess.

The CHAIRMAN: Is the hon. member speaking to the amendment?

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: I rose mainly to ask whether the Colonial Secretary has any information with reference to the excess areas and whether those areas are likely to be available.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I submit the discussion is out of order. May I ask your ruling, Mr. Chairman, as to whether the amendment is in order. I would refer you to Standing Order 173 which says—

The Title of a Bill shall coincide with the order of leave, and no clause shall be inserted in any such Bill foreign to its Title.

The CHAIRMAN: I have already ruled that this amendment is not outside the title of the Bill. The amendment may be discussed.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: The leader of the House has said that he is in sympathy with the object of the mover of this amendment. I understand by interjection that Sir Edward Wittenoom and others were also in sympathy with the object the mover had in view, and in consequence of the unity in that regard, surely some means could be devised for bringing the proposals into line with the Bill.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I did not say I was in sympathy with it. I said, if Parliament and the people desired it, they should

pass a law and take it. I could hardly be in sympathy with it when I have pointed out that on these small holdings people would not be able to make a living.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: Then I think the hon. member is in sympathy with any movement which has in view the enabling of returned soldiers to participate in the pastoral industry. In view of that, it would be a pity if the Bill did not contain some provision which would enable returned soldiers to participate in the pastoral industry. The matter could be postponed and the leader of the House could consult with his colleague and bring forward at the next sitting some proposal which would be in conformity with the Bill generally.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: I intend to support the amendment. If by agreeing to it we can bring about closer settlement and greater production, we are on the right road. It should be our desire to allow those large areas to carry some population and, if by making the necessary provision in the Bill, we can increase the population in those places and give returned soldiers who have fought for this country an opportunity of getting some of the land they fought for, we should agree to the amendment. The amendment provides that grazing areas may be repurchased. The leader of the House pointed out that this provision would be out of place in the Bill. That forces me to the belief that instead of having a full Bill to deal with this matter we are only getting half a measure. The people want full measures and not half measures. I agree with the leader of the House and Sir Edward Wittenoom that if these areas are resumed, the people who hold them should be paid for the improvements and should have their stock purchased and their interests safeguarded. At the same time, we do not desire to see large areas locked up for a few people to the great detriment of everyone in the State. Our Agent General in London is working in the direction of trying to get a large number of people to come to this country. The way to get population is by making provision which will be acceptable to the people whom we are inviting to come out. We are going to provide something for them to-day. I am led to believe these holdings are not anything like fully stocked.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: This is the way to settle them.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: I remember many years ago in the Eastern States the same arguments were put forward when any move was made in the direction of bringing about a closer settlement policy so far as grazing lands were concerned. The same thing is here to-day. A few years ago it was believed that the lands carrying sheep and cattle to-day would scarcely feed a grasshopper; I have repeatedly heard that statement. Yet we find those areas carrying large numbers of stock to-day. If the amendment be not agreed to, we shall be giving to the returned soldiers only half measure. The leader of the House said great difficulties would be created by the carrying of the amendment. Mr. Kirwan

has retorted to that with the suggestion that the leader of the House should consult the Government and bring down a separate Bill.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Without expressing an opinion as to the desirability of cutting up the large holdings of the North in the manner suggested, I should like to point out that we approach this subject of land settlement on the basis of £500 per man with, possibly, further advances. To take up even 20,000 acres would require £500 for fencing alone.

Hon. J. Mills: The land is already fenced.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Does the hon. member suggest confiscation? Among many the desire is to ruin the pastoral industry, which is about the only industry in the State in a prosperous condition to-day. On an area of 100,000 acres £10,000 would be required for fencing, £10,000 for stock, and £10,000 for water and other purposes.

Hon. H. Stewart: Then the measure would not be dangerous.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: When we come to leasehold, it must be remembered that there is a contract between the Crown and the tenant, and so we shall be making a breach of contract if we start resuming the land. This was tried in New South Wales years ago.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Let us try it again.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I hope hon. members will not wreck the Bill by carrying the amendment. The Crown cannot lease pastoral land and take it away again without a breach of contract.

Hon. J. Mills: What authority have you for saying that?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Cases have been tried before the Privy Council, and those cases can be looked up. There is no provision in the Bill as to how these leases are to be resumed, which confirms the point raised by the leader of the House, namely, that if it is to be done it must be done under a separate Bill.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I am surprised to hear Mr. Holmes asking hon. members not to wreck the Bill. Surely the carrying of this amendment will not wreck the Bill. The Government cannot withdraw an important measure of this nature because an amendment is carried with which the leader of the House himself is in sympathy. From the silence of the leader of the House I presume that the suggestion I made is not acceptable to him, namely, that as he and other members are in sympathy with the amendment, he should consult with the Government with a view to putting the amendment in an acceptable form. If the hon. member does not agree to bringing the matter forward again to-morrow, I will vote in favour of the amendment. The carrying of the amendment would not wreck the Bill, but would force the Government to ask for the withdrawal of the amendment with a view to the substitution of some more workable proposal.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I thought I had made it clear that I was not in favour of a provision of this kind being inserted in the Bill. The provision Mr. Hickey is proposing is not to allow returned soldiers to participate in the pastoral industry; we have

that provision already in the Bill. The provision the hon. member wants to insert is for the Government to take away the leases they have granted to other people and give them to returned soldiers. The Government have introduced another Bill to enable the Government to purchase land held by agricultural freeholders under certain conditions, and to achieve what Mr. Hickey wants it would be proper to introduce another Bill altogether.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: A pastoral lease is a contract entered into between the Crown and the tenant, and I very much question whether it can be interfered with. It has been asked why the Government did not resume the lands of the Midland Railway Company and have the price fixed by arbitration. It was because it was distinctly laid down in the agreement that this should not be done.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I have always understood that a person holding freehold land had an unassailable title; now we learn that a man with leasehold has a very much better security than the man with freehold. We have been given to understand that pastoral leases would be open to returned soldiers. It is news to me to be told that the existing titles are so very good that they cannot be interfered with, although the freehold title can be interfered with freely. I do not agree with those who say that 20,000 acres is not sufficient for a settler to make a living upon. If we embody a principle such as this in the Bill it will enable the Government to deal with leasehold lands alongside our railways. Many of our returned soldiers would readily avail themselves of the opportunity of acquiring a small holding of this nature, which would be far better for them than many of the agricultural freehold lands on which so much capital is required to equip them and put them into working order. If the pastoralist will not allow the Government to take these areas within a few miles of our railways, I shall be very much surprised. I feel inclined to support the amendment, in the hope that it will have the effect of giving our returned soldiers the opportunity of getting leasehold lands adjoining our railways. If necessary such land should be repurchased by the Government.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: In what way does Mr. Hickey consider the Act of 1906 is deficient for the purpose he has in view? It already gives the required provision, in my opinion.

The Colonial Secretary: Not for resuming for pastoral purposes.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: I based my amendment to some extent on the Act of 1906. That in itself, however, will not martingale the Government. I only want to give them power to resume pastoral country, just as they have power to resume other classes of country. If we added to the provisions contained in the 1906 Act my amendment, the Government would have no difficulty in arranging for an adjustment in this direction.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: I am in sympathy with the object of the mover of this amendment, but I do not know if it can be worked under this Bill. I want to the power given to

the Government to purchase these estates, but I question if the necessary machinery is provided by this amendment.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	12
Noes	..	..	..	12
				—
A tie	..	..	..	0
				—

AYES.

Hon. H. Carson	Hon. R. J. Lynn
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. H. Millington
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. J. Mills
Hon. J. E. Dodd	Hon. H. Stewart
Hon. J. Duffell	Hon. J. W. Hickey
Hon. V. Hamersley	(Teller.)
Hon. J. W. Kirwan	

NOES.

Hon. J. F. Allen	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. E. Rose
Hon. E. M. Clarke	Hon. A. Sanderson
Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom
Hon. J. A. Greig	Hon. C. McKenzie
Hon. J. J. Holmes	(Teller.)
Hon. G. W. Miles	

The CHAIRMAN: I give my casting vote for the Ayes.

Amendment thus passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 11—Price of land:

Hon. J. A. GREIG: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of the first proviso, after the words "discharged soldier," there be inserted "or next of kin of deceased soldier."

This Bill provides for dependants, but the next of kin is sometimes not a dependant. Boys may have gone to the Front at the age of 18. Their fathers may have selected land for them before their departure, and have financed them. They have, therefore, been dependent on their parents. This amendment will place such parents, who have kept the properties going for four years and been responsible for the money put into it, in the position of dependants.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The amendment will hardly attain its object. I have given notice of a new clause which has the same object. If a soldier were killed on active service who, prior to embarkation, held land to which this provision would be applicable, then it would be open to his parents to carry out the terms of the original contract or else to come under this measure. But how is the term "next of kin" to apply—in the legal sense, or as understood in the army? I think its interpretation should be restricted to that set out in the attestation paper of a soldier. The legal definition is altogether too wide for the purposes of this provision.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: On the second reading I cited a case upon which this amendment was based. A parent had taken up land, relying on the energy of his sons to enable him to pay for the land. But unfortunately the two sons, who had enlisted, were killed on active service. Parents who have lost sons at

the war should unquestionably receive the benefits of this measure.

Hon. J. E. DODD: This is a matter to which I also referred during the second reading debate. I recognise clearly that it is very difficult indeed for the Government to lay down a hard and fast rule dealing with every phase of the subject. Nevertheless, the Colonial Secretary might see his way clear to obtain advice on the matter, with a view to framing an amendment acceptable to the Committee. Take the case of a parent who has lost three sons—I know of such an actual case. The younger son of such a parent should be entitled to the benefits of this measure. Some latitude should be allowed the board for dealing with exceptional cases. I do not think the amendment meets the case.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not regard the amendment as suitable for the occasion. The new clause suggested by Mr. Cornell might be altered slightly, to make it more applicable. I think it would be a mistake to give the next of kin the benefits of this clause as a right, no matter what the circumstances might be. I can quite realise that there would be circumstances in which the board would recommend the next of kin for the benefit of this measure. On the other hand, there might be two brothers, one of whom took no interest in the war, while the other enlisted and was killed; then the indifferent brother might step in and claim the benefits of this Act.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I support the leader of the House in his opposition to the amendment. It is pretty obvious that in the time we have at our disposal we cannot do justice to this subject. Even if we passed the amendment, the board, after some experience of its working, would be sure to demand numerous further amendments. Whether this amendment is carried or not, the value of the land to a soldier is enormously depreciated unless he has an absolutely free market for his land. We cannot discuss the amendment satisfactorily and thoroughly in the time at our disposal.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: After hearing the leader of the House, I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I move an amendment, which I had intended to suggest to Mr. Greig—

That in the first proviso, after the word "soldier," in line 2, there be inserted "or in the case of a deceased soldier the surviving relative that in the board's opinion is most deserving of consideration."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: So far as I understand the amendment, I think it will meet the case. Unfortunately, I have not a copy of the amendment.

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

Clause 12—agreed to.

Clause 13—Preparing land for settlement:

Hon. J. EWING: I move an amendment—

That in line 8 of Subclause 2 the words "subject to the payment of interest" be struck out.

My desire is that the soldier shall have this land and pay nothing whatever for it for a

period of five years. I desire to affirm the principle I have advocated all through and it is that the soldier shall pay nothing during that period. Hon. members may say that we cannot afford it. I tried to explain yesterday the manner in which it could be done. The Federal Government will have to raise loans amounting to 40 millions annually until demobilisation is over, and that money will have to be expended in the direction of repatriating our soldiers. A sum of three millions will be handed over to this State out of that sum free of interest, and that will enable us to carry out what I propose.

The Colonial Secretary: Where did you say we were going to get that three millions?

Hon. J. EWING: From the Federal Government. If they borrow 40 millions annually for the purpose of repatriation, we shall surely be entitled to three millions of it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: If the hon. member will make his amendment conditional on the Federal Government paying us three millions a year, I will accept it, but I am afraid there is no prospect of our getting that sum of money. I am as anxious as anyone to do all that we can for the returned soldiers, but if we are going to remit interest for five years, we will limit the number of soldiers we will be able to deal with. At the present time we propose to remit rents amounting to £250,000 during the next 10 years so far as soldiers who had previously taken up land are concerned. The amount the hon. member suggests remitting would run into three or four times that sum. Practically a fourth of the capital would be given away to the soldiers. That is not a fair proposition. We have equal obligations to other soldiers and we might as well say that if a soldier goes into a house we can remit the rent for him for the first five years, which would amount to giving him a fourth of the capital.

Hon. E. ROSE: I do not see any objection to the hon. member's amendment. It says that the board "may" with the approval of the Minister. It does not say that it "shall."

The Colonial Secretary: He proposes the remission of the interest altogether.

Hon. J. EWING: We may as well come to a decision on this amendment, because I did propose to move another following on this one, but if the Committee are against me, I will not go any further. The period I suggest is only for five years and at the end of that time, if necessary, the amount due for interest could be capitalised and charged against the soldier. The principle is a right one, and the sacrifice would not be anything approaching what the Minister has suggested. Even if it did cost us that much, we would have the most successful settlement in any part of the world.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: I appreciate the sentiment underlying the amendment, but I realise that we are giving the soldiers the land at half price and free of rent for the first five years, and it seems to me that asking them to pay interest is only asking them to prove their bona fides. I do not think we can afford to do more than we are doing.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I should like to be able to support the hon. member, but the hon. member should consider what we are doing and what it is likely to involve us in. He spoke of three millions per annum as likely to come from the Commonwealth Government to Western Australia. If all the returned soldiers are to be treated on the same scale as other settlers on the land, the £500 alone would come to 15 millions. Apart from that, they get their land at half price, together with remission of rent. So, although we cannot do too much for those men, I do not think we can afford to go farther than we are going.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I should like to know from the Minister whether the first line of the clause meets with his approval. Now that the Committee has decided to put the Agricultural Bank as the financial principal in this affair, would it not be advisable to have the clause read "The Agricultural Bank may, with the approval of the Minister," instead of "the board may," etc.? Having decided upon the bank as the financial principal, do not let us make the mistake of leaving important questions of finance in the hands of the board.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not see any harm in giving the board these powers. A little while ago the board was to be entrusted with everything, but now objection is taken to leaving anything whatever to the board.

Hon. J. EWING: I agree with Mr. Sanderson. We have decided that the board cannot have the responsibility of expenditure of money. Yet the board still have great powers for spending money.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: With the approval of the Minister.

Hon. J. A. EWING: Well, what can the bank do without the approval of the Minister? All expenditure should come under the Agricultural Bank.

Hon. E. M. CLARKE: The board, with the approval of the Minister, has power to expend certain money. Obviously the bank has to find that money. Hon. members must not forget that fact.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: After the expression of opinion given by hon. members I am more than ever convinced that this power should be left to the Agricultural Bank. I should have thought that this was almost a consequential amendment on what we have already passed. I have a distinct recollection of two reports by the Agricultural Bank, referring to this very matter.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 14—Assistance to settlers to erect buildings, purchase stock, etc.:

Hon. H. STEWART: I should like to hear from the Minister how much it is proposed may be spent on house accommodation. The statement has been made here that under the Agricultural Bank administration the maximum amount that can be spent on housing accommodation for a settler on the land and his wife is restricted to £30. Is any such limitation to be imposed under this Bill?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: There is no limitation imposed. The board will recommend what they think necessary.

Hon. E. M. Clarke: According to the next succeeding clause the board have the right to make recommendations to the bank.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 15—agreed to.

Clause 16—Security for advances:

Hon. A. SANDERSON: To whom is the money advanced by the board or the Agricultural Bank to be paid? What system is to be adopted? Will a portion of the advances that are given be given to the board, and another portion to the bank, or will the whole of it be paid to the bank?

Hon. J. Ewing: The bank will have full control.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Then the board will not be advancing a penny.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: The clause says "all moneys advanced by the board or the Agricultural Bank," and Clause 6 says, that the duties of the board shall be to recommend to the Agricultural Bank what assistance shall be given and advances made to applicants under the Bill. This seems contradictory.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is intended that the board shall make advances and spend money temporarily, and that when the soldier gets into possession the amount is refunded to the board by the Agricultural Bank.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Where does the board get the money from?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is granted under the provisions of Clause 28.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I am not satisfied with the explanation. One of the reasons that we are financially embarrassed is because we go on a system such as this in many of our undertakings. I have not had time to put a proposal before the Committee which possibly might put the thing on a proper basis.

Hon. H. STEWART: I move an amendment—

That in Subclause 1, line 4, Subclause 2, line 1, and Subclause 3, line 2, the words "and chattels" be struck out and "stock, machinery and plant" inserted in lieu.

I think this amendment will bring the Bill more into accord with the spirit of repatriation. In the "West Australian" of the 4th July last there is some light thrown on the position in regard to soldiers not being repatriated on the land. The extract I have here says—

Important provisions affecting the welfare of returned soldiers are contained in the amended regulation issued under the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act. This provides that State boards shall not grant loans for a longer period than ten years. Where the borrower who has obtained a loan from the department is unable to repay the amount due by him, the State board may write off the whole or any portion of the amount, but if the sum exceeds £100 it must be referred to the Minister for determination.

The object of my amendment is to protect the personal property of the settler, and it is in accord with the scheme of repatriation.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I hope the Committee will not strike out this word. The security is only taken over the chattels when they have been purchased by the money advanced by the board or by the bank. Perhaps the hon. member wishes that money to be given and not loaned. As to protecting the farmer or settler in possession of these chattels, I think the amendment would have the opposite effect.

Hon. H. STEWART: The Colonial Secretary has not replied to my reference to the statement appearing in the "West Australian."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is a case where the repatriation committee advanced money for certain purposes, and under certain circumstances the debt might be written off. Even there they take security over the chattels.

Hon. H. STEWART: In view of the remarks of the Colonial Secretary, I should like to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 17—Advances may be stopped or recalled:

Hon. J. EWING: This is a most drastic provision and places the whole power in the hands of the Agricultural Bank. I presume the Minister would be consulted, and I presume he would agree to what the Agricultural Bank might propose. I move an amendment—

That the following be added to the clause: "but before any such action be taken by the trustees, the board must be consulted and its approval obtained; any difference of opinion between the two bodies to be referred to the Minister, whose decision shall be final."

Surely that is a reasonable addition to the clause.

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

Clauses 18 to 21—agreed to.

Clause 22—Acquisition of private lands to be dealt with under this Act:

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: This clause contains the very power which Mr. Hickey has been seeking to obtain right through. Under this clause, anyone who fancies one of Mr. Mills's 20,000-acre leases could go in and acquire it. However, compulsory purchase of leaseholds would be attended with numerous difficulties. Freehold land belongs to an individual; but a conditional purchase leasehold belongs to the Government, who cannot well repurchase land which they have leased for long periods, without granting compensation to the lessees.

Hon. J. MILLS: I cannot agree with Sir Edward Wittenoom, as regards this clause. Think of a returned soldier going to a Murchison station and suggesting that the owner should sell him 20,000 acres; one could well imagine the reply which the soldier would receive. I consider the amendment was very necessary.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: I do not think Sir Edward Wittenoom's interpretation of this clause is correct. The clause gives the Minister power to purchase, but not for pastoral purposes. The Land Act gives the Government the right to resume for certain purposes, but among them is not that of re-letting the land for pastoral purposes.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: If a returned soldier finds that he can get a block of land which will suit him on a pastoral lease, and he goes to the board and the board recommend the purchase, the Government have, under this clause, full power to make the purchase.

The Colonial Secretary: Providing the owner is willing to sell.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: The question raised was whether the Government would have the power to purchase in such a case. Of course, there is the further question whether the Government should be empowered to purchase where the owner was not willing to sell.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 23—Training farms:

Hon. A. SANDERSON: There is nothing in this clause as to the financial arrangements of these farms. Is this clause just copied from the New South Wales Act? Or have the Government a specific proposal in mind?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: In moving the second reading I explained, and again, more fully, in replying, that the Government had set apart portion of the Avondale estate, including the homestead, for this purpose, and that the Brunswick State farm was also to be used for this purpose, and that a number of returned soldiers had already applied for training, and that arrangements were all in hand, and that some of the soldiers would start on the training farms at the beginning of the coming year.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 24, 25, 26—agreed to.

Clause 27—Power to extend Act to advances made before the commencement thereof:

Hon. A. SANDERSON: This clause provides that the Government may, with the sanction of the Government, do certain things.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: In accordance with an intention already expressed, I move an amendment—

That in lines 1 and 2 the words "with the sanction of the Government" be struck out.

These words were inserted in another place, and perhaps their deletion here may lead to an explanation of why they were inserted.

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

Clause 28—Financial provisions:

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I wish to see the accounts of soldiers kept separately from the ordinary accounts of the Agricultural Bank. Under the system proposed here the Federal money will flow into the coffers of the Agricultural Bank, which will also receive the additional money to be advanced by this State for the purposes of soldier settlement. We shall want to know whether the soldiers' side of the bank is losing, or the ordinary side of the bank; and therefore we ought to be most

careful to see that the two sets of accounts are kept perfectly separate. Otherwise, the Federal Government's money coming to this State will simply be pooled with the Agricultural Bank's funds. If it is the wish of the Committee that that should be done, well and good. If it is the wish of the Committee that those accounts should be kept separately, the only way to do that is to strike out what I suggest.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The striking out of the subclause will not have the effect the hon. member desires. Subclause 4 provides that the moneys to be appropriated shall include such moneys as are provided by the Commonwealth for the purposes of this Act. That deals with the £500 for each soldier, but if Subclause 3 is struck out, that will be as far as the Agricultural Bank will go. It will not be able to use its ordinary funds. So far as accounts are concerned, they must be kept separately in order to comply with Clause 30. The £50,000 referred to in Subclause 2 is really a floating amount to be used by the board in improvements.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 29—agreed to.

Clause 30—Annual report:

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I want to see a provision in this clause for the printing of the reports of this board.

The Colonial Secretary: I certainly think reports of this kind ought to be printed, and it will be the intention of the Government to print them.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: The clause is indefinite as it is and it might be amended to provide that the reports should be printed each year. I move an amendment—

That in line 1 the words "as early as possible" be struck out and "within two months" inserted in lieu.

That will provide that the reports will have to make their appearance two months after the close of the financial year.

Amendment put and passed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: As it is the wish of hon. members that the reports should be printed, I move a further amendment—

That in line before "report" the word "printed" be inserted.

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

New clause:

Hon. J. MILLS: I move—

That the following be added to stand as Clause 28:—28. Every Australian soldier who has served overseas, and who at the time of his enlistment was either bankrupt or insolvent, shall on his return automatically become discharged from all debts contracted by him prior to enlistment, subject to his filing a statement of all his liabilities so incurred with the Official Receiver in Bankruptcy verified by a statutory declaration.

The CHAIRMAN: I have given the proposed new clause the closest consideration and I find it is distinctly out of order because of the

Standing Order which has been already twice quoted by me to-night, as follows—

The Title of a Bill shall coincide with the order of leave, and no clause shall be inserted in any such Bill foreign to its Title. This is a Bill for an Act to provide for the settlement of discharged soldiers on the land. The proposed new clause has nothing to do with the settlement of discharged soldiers on the land. Therefore I rule it out of order.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: Would it be possible to move to alter the Title of the Bill?

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think so, unless the hon. member is prepared to move to amend the Title of the Bill by including in it reference to the amending of the Bankruptcy Act. This, I think, would be carrying it a little too far. The clause is distinctly out of order.

[The Deputy President took the Chair.]

Bill reported with amendments, and a Message accordingly forwarded to the Assembly requesting them to make the amendments, leave being given to sit again on receipt of a Message from the Assembly.

BILL—GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES (North) [10.50]: I rise to oppose the second reading. The Colonial Secretary has made out a very good case for the retention of one Commissioner instead of the appointment of three. The Colonial Secretary compared our railway figures with those of Victoria and New South Wales. During the four years of war the railways of Victoria have lost £1,600,000, while in New South Wales the loss has been £460,000. In those two States the system of three Commissioners obtains. Western Australia for a similar period shows a loss of £450,000 notwithstanding that the revenue of the West Australian railways decreased by £60,000 during the last year. The position also in regard to our railways as compared with those of the Eastern States is that we have one mile of railway for every 89 persons, while in the Eastern States it is one mile for every 296 persons. I think the management of the railways under Mr. Short has been exceptionally good. If the Commissioner's latest report be examined at page 5, it will be seen that the total earnings in the year before the war were £2,257,000, while last year the amount was £1,800,000. The percentage of the revenue to capital in 1913 was 4.32, while in the last year it was 2.05. The interest per train mile in 1913 was 24.02, while in 1918 it was 38.34. And the population of the State, which has to be taken into consideration, was 324,000 in 1913-14, while it was 311,000 in 1918. I think our present Commissioner should get a clean record when he retires from his position. I think also that when his term expired six months ago the least the Government could have done was to have given him notice in writing, which they did not do. I do not wish to see the

present Commissioner made a scapegoat in support of the Bill for the appointment of three Commissioners. We want one good Commissioner. We should pay him a decent salary and relieve him from all Ministerial interference. The Ministerial interference we have had in the past has been the cause of a large proportion of the labour troubles in the Railways. If the Commissioner had been allowed to pay the increase due to his officers, much better results would have been obtained. Recently the Government introduced the Forestry Bill, providing for one Conservator. The Forestry Department has an asset of 100 millions to control. It is proposed to place the control of that huge interest under one Conservator, while the railways, with an asset of only 17 millions, are to be handed over to three Commissioners. If they do appoint three Commissioners, the chairman is to have certain special powers, and the system will resolve itself into one Commissioner after all. We should have only one Commissioner and he should be paid £3,000 or £4,000 a year and his immediate officers should have their salaries increased. I think the higher officers of the service are all that is required, if only we gave them decent treatment. I am sure we shall get better results from one Commissioner than from three. The dual control which hurts our railways is to be found in the present Ministry. Indeed, it triple control, with no head, and the Ministry are trying to bring about the same result in the Railways. In America, owing to the war, one man was put in charge of all the railways and, as we know, on the fighting front in France, one general was put in charge of the whole of the operations. So, too, with a ship, one captain is all that is required, and I say that one man is the only proper form of control for the railways. I hope that, when the new Commissioner is appointed, he will not be subjected to Ministerial interference as in the past. The policy, perhaps, should be framed by the Government, but the railways themselves should be run by the Commissioner, and should be compensated for any loss incurred in assisting any particular industry. The revenue of the railways is £440,000 less this year than it was in 1913-14, and in addition we are paying an increase of £100,000 in interest, and we have 524 additional miles of railway. Notwithstanding that, the railways have been run more economically than those in the Eastern States. The profit in 1913-14 was £128,000 and the loss made in 1917-18 was £289,000, or a total difference of £417,000. This is made up by the difference in the revenue and by the increased interest, to say nothing of the increase in wages under the Arbitration Court awards, with which the Commissioner has had nothing to do. In addition there has been the increased price of coal, Newcastle coal being now 3s. 4d. higher per ton and Collie coal 1s. 6d., representing £16,000 on the consumption of Collie coal alone. Clearly therefore it is not the fault of the Commissioner that the Railways have not shown a better profit.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: In what year was that?

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: I think it was last year. Circumstances beyond the control

of the Commissioner have been responsible for the increase in the price of coal. It might interest members to know that for the years 1914 to 1918 the Western Australian railways made a loss of £460,000, and that the revenue decreased in 1916-17 by £60,000. South Australia had a loss of £524,000, and an increase in revenue of £58,000 last year. Victoria lost for the four years £1,637,000, and the increase last year in revenue was £613,000. New South Wales lost £460,000, and had an increase in revenue of £574,000. Queensland lost £2,255,000, and the increase in revenue was £191,000. Tasmania lost £453,000, and the increase in revenue was £16,000. Most of these States have three commissioners. One commissioner can control the railways of this State, and if his officers are paid decent salaries and he has the right men, as I think he has, he will be able to run the railways more profitably in the future than has been the case in the past. With our population coming back we shall have a larger number of people per train mile, and one man could carry out the work better than three. I think it is the intention of the Government that Mr. Short shall get an honourable discharge when he retires. I understand he is going on long service leave at the end of this year. I am glad he is taking that leave. I do not think he has any desire to retain the position, but I wish to see that he is not made the scapegoat in order that the Government may have a chance of bringing this measure forward. I cannot understand the object of this Bill. I do not want to see salaries cut down, as I think the railways can well afford to pay up to £5,000 a year if necessary, in order to get the best brains and ability in the chief commissioner, who will control them. It is better to pay a good man a good salary than to have two or three ordinary men at a lower salary, such as is proposed by the Government. I intend to vote against the second reading, and hope the House will throw out the Bill.

Hon. R. J. LYNN (West) [11.5]: I hold somewhat conflicting views on this Bill. I believe that the task allotted to any one man under existing conditions is rather heavy, if we are to get that efficiency which is so necessary in connection with a big trading concern such as this. I also realise that under existing conditions here it would not matter one iota whether we had one commissioner or 50 commissioners. The policy of the Commissioner is altered and dictated by the powers that be. Eighteen months ago it was decided, as a matter of policy, to reduce the superphosphate rates and terminal charges on railways to the extent of £50,000. The Commissioner put up a protest against the reduction of these charges, and pointed out that it was impossible for the railways in the remote parts of the State, where they had these terminal charges incurred, and where the costs were heavy, to pay. It was the policy of the Government, however, to reduce these charges, and he had to accept the dictum of the present party in power. That would apply if there were three commissioners or 30. If the administration of the Railway Department is to be subject to the policy of the Government, I think one commissioner is quite

sufficient, and if we had none at all I do not think it would make much difference. The Commissioner is allotted the task of controlling all the railways of the State, and to them we have now attached the famous Perth tramways and the East Perth power house. Hon. members will recollect that this East Perth power house came in for severe criticism. We were told that when the power house was being built at such a cost it would not pay unless the station generated so many millions of units per annum so that the standing charges should not be too heavy for a business proposition. A Bill was introduced to take away the rights of the other municipalities and force the trade into the East Perth power house. That was done for no other purpose than to give it a big output, so that the standing charges on the output would be reduced. It was recognised that they must have a big output, or the standing charges would absorb everything in connection with it. When there was a strike on the goldfields on the wood line, and I was anxious to see coal sent from Collie to Kalgoorlie, in order to give the Collie coal a flip, and to keep the industry going on the fields, I suggested that it would be an easy matter for the Railway Department to run full train loads of coal from Collie to the goldfields on the same basis as the Government had forced the trade into the East Perth power house. I said, "You have the standing charges on the railways and your interest and sinking fund are going on. The maintenance is just the same, and you have the same number of men between Perth and Kalgoorlie whether you are running ten trains or two. If you make your standing charges cover all this trade and this additional traffic is provided, it must of necessity reduce your overhead charges." Although this applied to the East Perth power house, it did not apply to sending coal to the goldfields, notwithstanding that the same arguments held good. I do not think anyone will view with any favour the administration of the tramways. The lowest fare on the Perth tramway system is 25 per cent. higher than the highest fare on the Fremantle system. If we take the average, and the distance, and the rates into consideration we will find it is 100 per cent. higher. The task for one commissioner is an extremely heavy one, when we take into consideration the industrial troubles that he has to contend with and all the other things in connection with increased costs generally. If the administration of the railways and the revenue of the railways to be effected because of the policy of the Governments, it matters little whether we have three commissioners or 30, or none. Because of that I oppose the second reading of the Bill. The fault in the administration of the Railway Department is that the departmental heads and the responsible officials are not entrusted with the administration of their own local affairs in connection with matters of local interest. Take a place like Fremantle, where we have a goods agent. That goods agent is controlling the traffic of Fremantle, and of the wharves. He has no more authority in connection with the control and administration of the work per-

formed there than the office boy has in the Colonial Secretary's Department. I am brought daily into contact with the work of this goods agent. If it is a question of 4s. for demurrage on a truck of coal that is in dispute it is a subject-matter for a report to Perth, because of the regulations. A file is made up, and I expect that 24s. is expended in clerical labour instead of this small question being decided on the spot. Where we have responsible officers controlling what might be termed a branch office from the commercial point of view, he should be empowered to administer that branch up to a certain point. Let us say that a Perth house has established a branch office at Geraldton. It is necessary that a man should have business acumen in the administration of a particular office and show sound judgment and decision of character, otherwise he is no good to the firm. If he is handicapped in regard to some small affair and is unable to decide a little question he will soon be removed from his office. Let any hon. member visit the office of the Commissioner of Railways and go upstairs. There are dozens of typists going full steam. If they were to ascertain what these typists were doing they would find that it is something which the ordinary commercial house would dismiss with a manager in control, without any reference to the principal of the firm. So long as we have a system which is bound up with red tape such as is the Railway Department, we must of necessity have a cumbersome system and one which will cost so much in administration and give little or no good results to the people dealing with them. Take the superintendents in connection with the various districts. If we had one good commissioner and additional power was vested in these responsible officers, and they were made to realise that their responsibilities were such that their positions depended upon their sound judgment, any additional increment that might be paid to them or any promotion in the service that might be given to them would be the means of introducing a system of competition in connection with the administration of the department, which would bring out the best in a man instead of his being curbed by the red tape system which is now in existence. Mr. Miles quoted from the reports of the Railway Commissioner respecting the additional £16,000 for the use of Collie coal. The files laid upon the Table of the House during the last few weeks disclose the most generous treatment on the part of the Railways to the coal industry. Mr. Short admits that on our railways he is going to burn 100 per cent. of Collie coal, and that he has been doing this for some time. But he extremely regrets that he is forced into the position of burning 100 per cent. of the local product because he cannot get any Eastern States coal. Any hon. member can refer for himself to the file and see the Commissioner's admission. It appears, thus, that Collie coal has saved the Railway Department some tens of thousands of pounds annually during the last four years. Certainly, the use of Collie coal has not involved the department in ad-

ditional cost, since but for the local article the railways would have been hung up: probably they would have been unable to perform their function at this present time. I have no wish to say other than that the Commissioner has proved a very worthy public servant, one who has filled the high position with credit to himself. But it may be urged that because of political interference in matters of policy he has failed to bring the railway system up to a standard of efficiency which otherwise he would have achieved. Look at the attitude of the Railway Department during the past twenty years towards one of the primary industries of Western Australia. We have the spectacle even to-day, after all these years, of the failure to devise a special class of locomotive for the use of our native fuel. That one fact is in itself sufficient to prove incapacity of the railway administration, to condemn that administration. Any member who cares to take a walk to West Perth can observe for himself as primitive a method of coaling locomotives as may be seen in any part of the world. The Western Australian system of bunkering is that in vogue in China and India—bumping the coal out on a siding and then shovelling it back on to the locomotives per medium of baskets, instead of an up-to-date system of loading in bins and discharging it by a chute direct into the locomotive tender. Our methods of handling coal and bunkering locomotives are those which obtained when railway transport was first initiated. Unless some pressure is brought to bear on the future administrators of our railways, these methods will be continued until we are all dead and gone, or, as Mr. Sanderson might say, until unification supervenes.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Is Collie coal always satisfactory?

Hon. R. J. LYNN: I believe Collie coal is a fuel which gives absolute satisfaction.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I would point out that the Collie coal question has very little to do with the Bill.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: If the commodity most largely used by the Railway Department is being handled with such shocking inefficiency as to cost the State annually some tens of thousands of pounds as against the comparatively very small expense of handling by mechanical appliances, surely comment on the matter is not irrelevant to the question whether we shall appoint one Commissioner, or two, or three Commissioners. I was merely discussing that important phase of railway administration.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: If the hon. member connects the matter with the Bill, it is a different position.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: I think I am connecting it with the Bill when I show that for years past our railway administration has shown little sympathy with our local fuel and has paid little attention to methods of handling coal. Those seem to me connecting points. However, I have no desire to pursue the subject if you, Sir, consider it irrelevant to the measure. Coming to the question of our Railways generally. I am not pessimistic, although

some statistics which give food for thought have been quoted respecting the railway deficit. I feel sure that in this respect an alteration will come in the very near future. Twenty years ago, let me point out, one could go from Perth to Busselton per train once daily, to Bunbury thrice daily, and from the South-West to the metropolitan area twice or thrice per day. The very heavy capital cost of our railways, involving huge payments for interest and sinking fund, leaves a very narrow margin of profit on the comparatively small traffic being run latterly; for the standing charges have become disproportionately high. But the termination of the war will bring a return of prosperity. During the first three months of 1919 there should be from 100 to 150 steamers passing through Fremantle and Bunbury. In normal conditions the traffic on our railways will increase so as to spread the overhead charges over a much wider field, and prosperity will again dawn on our Railway Department. I am prepared to admit there is a good deal in the proposal that we should appoint one Commissioner of Railways at a high salary. But there is another side to it. If we bring a man from overseas he will know nothing about our local conditions, or about political influence. If he were installed in the Railway Department as an autocrat or a Czar, he would not last many months, it is safe to predict; and in the upshot the Government would probably be compelled to give him a large sum of money in consideration of the cancellation of his agreement. This place is too small for the appointment of a railway autocrat. One cannot walk down the main street without being known to everybody that comes along. I fear a single imported Commissioner would not prove the success some people anticipate. I would like to see the Government give this chance to a man already in the service, a young man if possible. Put him in the office of Commissioner, give him increased power and responsibility, and let us see whether we have not amongst us someone capable of filling the Commissionership of Railways worthily, and with advantage to the State of Western Australia. If the Government would adopt this suggestion, and at the same time invest the departmental sub-heads throughout the system with larger responsibilities, the results would, I believe, prove beneficial. Let the Railway Department appoint, for instance, a goods agent at Fremantle. It is years since the Fremantle Chamber of Commerce and other public bodies of Fremantle interviewed the Minister for Railways on this very subject, and said to him, in effect, "Here you have a place like Fremantle with a tremendous amount of traffic and work going on morning and night; and with all the regulations you bring in we are at times unable to gather exactly where we stand. Place a goods agent at Fremantle, and give him authority to deal with us without having to refer matters to Perth to the extent that is required to-day, and you will find that greater satisfaction will result." The same argument applies to Kalgoorlie. I say, appoint such officers and pay them reasonable salaries, and if they prove unequal to the work, if the jobs are too big for them, put them out and get

other men. By reforms of the kind I have suggested, the Railway Department of this State would be enabled to make good. But that department will never make good, even under the best railway man in the world, if the man in supreme control is curbed by the policy of the Government. If the Commissioner is hampered by regulations, he is bound to hamper every man under him who wants increased responsibility. I do not know that the Government have any particular man or men in view for the Commissionership or Commissionerships, and I do not know that the rejection of this Bill would embarrass them very much. I certainly shall vote against the second reading, in the hope that the Government will give prompt consideration to the advisability of affording our own local men the opportunity of proving their fitness to control our Railway Department under conditions of enlarged responsibility in administration.

On motion by Hon. H. Stewart, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [11.27] : I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until 3 p.m. to-morrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 11.28 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 17th December, 1918.

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

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

BILL—WHEAT MARKETING ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the previous sitting.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

Postponed Clause 5—Ratification of agreement, First Schedule:

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: This clause was postponed, and, having considered the matter, I am prepared to agree to the amendment suggested at the last sitting by the member for North-East Fremantle.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This clause is really the Bill. Our friends on the cross benches have assured us many times during the discussion of this measure that the associa-