

Hon. J. F. CULLEN moved an amendment—

That in the line "trailer to traction engine" the license fee "£2 (annual)" be struck out, and "3s. 4d. per month" inserted in lieu.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: The charge of 6s. a wheel for every ton or part of a ton in excess of five tons on a traction engine of five to eight tons in addition to the £5 annual fee seemed rather heavy.

Hon. C. SOMMERS: The fees in each instance seemed heavy and should be reduced. No distinction was made between the different makes of cars. A light Ford car would pay as much as a 20 horse-power Daimler car, although the latter would weigh twice as much and do twice the damage. Apparently a traction engine to carry eight tons would cost £10 a year. If such a traction engine was working on a farm, would a license fee have to be paid or would a license be necessary only when it was taken on to a road?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: If a traction engine did not go on to the road a license fee would not have to be paid. Where the fee of £2 annual was stipulated it meant that the full £2 must be paid.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: Trailers would be subject to the same use as traction engines and would not be used more than the traction engines. The tractor would be subject to a monthly charge because it might be used in only one month of the year. Therefore, why should a license have to be paid for a trailer to cover the whole year? Why should not that be made a monthly charge? It would be absurd to insist on the payment of £2 for a trailer and £1 for the tractor.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 9.37 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 5th November, 1913.

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

QUESTION — STATE STEAMER "WESTERN AUSTRALIA," EN- GINEER'S STAFF.

Hon. FRANK WILSON asked the Premier: 1, How many changes have taken place on the engineer's staff of the State steamer "Western Australia"? 2, Did any of the engineers that came out on the vessel apply for re-appointment? 3, How many received re-appointment? Are they still on the vessel? 4, The names of those whose services have been dispensed with, and the reasons?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Twelve. 2 and 3, All the staff that came out with the vessel from England remained in the ship for the first voyage to the North. On the return from that trip the chief and three other engineers resigned. Of the three original engineers then remaining in the ship one was afterwards dismissed for carelessness and the other two for unsatisfactory conduct. 4, In the interests of the men it is not desirable to publish the names.

QUESTION—EMPIRE PARLIA- MENTARY PARTY'S VISIT.

Copies of Correspondence.

Hon. FRANK WILSON asked the Premier: 1, In connection with the recent visit of the English Parliamentarians was a copy of a letter or letters from the Premier to the mayor of Albany supplied to the member for Albany or any other person? 2, If so, with what object? 3, Seeing that a member of the Albany town council (Councillor Collins) produced a copy of one of the Premier's letters to the mayor at a meeting of the council held

on the 28th October, how did this councillor obtain the said copy? 4, If the copies of the correspondence were supplied to the member for Albany, for what purpose did he sent them to Councillor Collins? 5, If the Premier did not supply the copies of correspondence, will he make inquiries and explain to the House how they became public property in this manner?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes. 2, In view of the visit being a Parliamentary one, the State the hosts, and the letter not being of a private nature, it was deemed an act of courtesy to supply the hon. member for Albany with a copy of the initial communication in order that he might be aware of what was proposed to be done. The following is the letter referred to:—"3rd September, 1913. Dear Sir,—I am desired by the Hon. Premier to inform you that the Empire Parliamentary Association is paying a brief visit to this State on the 30th September and the 1st and 2nd October. The party comprises members of the House of Lords and the House of Commons—some 37 persons in all, including ladies. Under the present arrangements the party will arrive at Albany at noon on the 30th September per s.s. 'Marathon,' and leave by special train at 2 o'clock for Mount Barker. As the visitors can only remain in Albany for two (2) hours after arrival it will not be possible to arrange for any municipal reception there, but the Hon. the Premier will be glad to have the assistance of yourself and councillors in publicly welcoming our English friends to the State immediately the s.s. 'Marathon' is in port. Yours faithfully, (Sgd.) A. C. Kessell, secretary to the Premier. His worship the mayor, Albany." 3, The letter, it will be seen, was addressed to his worship the mayor of Albany, and as it was not marked private its contents were intended for the councillors as well as the mayor, and it will be noted in this particular instance that the words "mayor and councillors" are used, and I take it, therefore, that the letter was in the possession of the councillors, and a copy could easily have been obtained from their official file. 4, I am not aware that the hon. member for the

district sent a copy of the letter in question to Councillor Collins. If he did so, and the hon. member for Sussex desires to learn the reason for his so doing, he should submit a question direct to the hon. member for Albany. 5, The letter being an official one, passing between the Premier's office and the mayor and councillors of Albany, and not in any sense of a private nature, was the property of the mayor and councillors, and through them the citizens, and consequently was a public communication. As further evidence of the communication being of a public nature, I would point out that the whole of the official correspondence on the subject has been made public by the mayor of Albany and published in the Press.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Was that letter addressed to the mayor and councillors?

The PREMIER: One does not address a letter to more than one person. It was addressed to the mayor, but the councillors were mentioned in it.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES—1912-13.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the previous day, Mr. McDowall in the Chair.

Treasury Department continued (Hon. J. Scaddan, Treasurer).

Vote—*Taxation*, £14,953—agreed to.

Vote—*Workers' Homes Board*, £7,398:

Hon. FRANK WILSON: In this vote we were not showing any signs of economy. There was a £5,000 increase. Portion of this was for two years and four months' salaries of members of the board. Would the Premier say how much these members were paid and whether they were all civil servants.

The PREMIER: The members of the board acted in an honorary capacity. They were public servants, and as a certain proportion of their time was occupied in connection with the business of the Workers' Homes Board it had been decided that the respective departments should be remunerated for the loss of their services, and that this should be made a charge against the board. As the

services of these officers were given to the board's business, it was necessary to charge the board with a proportion of their salaries and that this amount should be recouped to the revenue of the departments concerned. The members of the board did not receive a penny of it:

Hon. FRANK WILSON: But £815 of the amount had been already expended, for it dated back some 16 months before the present year. These officers had already drawn their salaries, which had been paid by the several departments. How was the Premier to expend this £815 shown on the Estimates; to whom did he propose to pay it?

The Premier: To revenue.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: But these officers had already been paid and the money charged up against Consolidated Revenue. Obviously it could not be charged a second time. The item should be reduced to cover merely the present year's expenditure.

The PREMIER: It was true that the item covered a period of about 16 months prior to the current financial year. However it was only a bookkeeping entry. These officers had been paid their salaries each year by their respective departments and the matter had only been adjusted during the last financial year, when he had decided that the board should be charged up with the amount. As a matter of fact it would be found that there were thousands of pounds on the Estimates each year which represented only bookkeeping entries put in for the purpose of adjusting the financial relations between the various departments. For years past the Works Department had been controlling the harbours. It would not be fair to make the Works Department bear the cost of works other than its own, and so bookkeeping entries were made and it was brought to revenue. The Works Department, the Lands Department and the Savings Bank showed the amounts covering their officers. This was really making a proper debit against the Workers' Homes Board for the services of officers belonging to other departments. The only point was whether we could go back beyond the 30th June last. It was merely

a balancing account and every year the Government adjusted accounts brought forward after the close of the financial year that should have been adjusted in the previous year.

Hon. Frank Wilson: No.

The PREMIER: Yes; thousands of pounds were adjusted each year. The Workers' Homes Board would probably prefer to be charged only with the amount for this financial year, but he desired that the proper charge against the board since its inception should be made.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You can do that in the balance sheet of the board, but not in the Estimates.

The PREMIER: Then the hon. member might say later on that it should have been shown in the Estimates.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: These Estimates were cash transactions for a given period. It was not as if the Treasury adopted the double entry system of bookkeeping where it was possible to debit and credit. That could not be done when dealing with cash, and cash only was dealt with in the Treasury. Each year must stand on its own basis up to a certain date. He had shown the other night that the Premier had £183,000 left out of last year's transactions which was paid subsequently. The accounts were paid because they had not been rendered before, but they could not be put into the previous year. In this case there was about £500 out of £815 paid away in cash prior to last July.

The Premier: Not by this department, but by another.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: It did not matter. The Treasury was the whole department.

The Premier: No, the Treasury only deals in cash transactions.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The £500 was paid away prior to the 1st July and debited in the Treasury accounts, and could not be revived. It was a cash transaction. If that could be done with £500 it could be done with half a million. The thing was wrong. The gentlemen in question had received their salaries, and the amount had been debited to Consolidated Revenue. It could not be debited a

second time. Where would the amount be collected from, or to whom would it be paid? It was impracticable as it was a cash transaction.

The PREMIER: The hon. member was getting confused. The Treasury merely took account of cash transactions, but the Treasury did not pay this amount. The Works Department paid it to Mr. Hardwick, one member of the board, the Savings Bank to Mr. Leschen, and the Lands Department to Mr. Johnston.

Hon. Frank Wilson: And it has been debited to those departments.

The PREMIER: Certainly, and now the Government had approved of the payment of the account by the Workers' Homes Board to recoup those departments for the payments they had made.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What will you do with the money?

The PREMIER: It was his object merely to recoup those departments.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You are inflating your revenue in this year for last year's expenditure.

The PREMIER: Not in the slightest. The payment had to be made.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Why not make it £50,000?

The PREMIER: The Workers' Homes Board were being charged with £815, but this did not affect the Estimates by a single penny. It only affected the accounts of the Workers' Homes Board by debiting against that board the services of the officers of other departments.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Miscellaneous Services*, £37,792:

Item, Sailors' Home, Bunbury, £100:

Mr. PRICE: What was the reason for the increase in the subsidy to the sailors' home at Bunbury? In previous years it had been £50. In 1911-13 £50 was voted, but was not drawn by the home. Consequently in 1912-13 the vote appeared as £100, including £50 not collected in the previous year, and £50 for that year. Now it was shown as £100 per annum. Apparently an error had been made.

The PREMIER: Evidently the £100 representing two years' grant had been carried forward in error. Only the usual amount of £50 would be paid.

Item, Victoria Institute and Industrial School for the Blind, Upkeep, £500:

Mr. LEWIS: Could not the Premier induce the Tender Board to give a proportion of the work to this institution. Prior to last year it received a fairly large amount of the work, but last year the work was taken away. The council of management had an overdraft of £1,400 and a good deal of surplus stock on hand, and during the last few weeks a number of blind workers had been out of employment. They worked on piece work rates, and at the best some of them earned only 17s. a week. A kindly disposed person in the district provided them with board and lodging for 15s. a week, which left the magnificent surplus of 2s. a week with which to keep themselves in clothes and incidentals.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What sort of work is it?

Mr. LEWIS: The manufacture of brushware, brooms and mats. These men could not afford to be out of work at any time, as they had nothing to fall back on, and the position was serious. On Monday last a public meeting was held at Maylands to devise means to assist these workers. Several motions were carried, one of which was that the Government should have a representative on the council of management. The Government were represented on the boards of hospitals and other institutions to which Government money was granted, and the people contended that the Government should be represented on this council. There was no manager in charge of the institution at present. During the last twelve months the overdraft had increased by £638. There had been a decrease in the amount of sales of £200, and the manager's salary £250, had to be deducted. Thus the management of the institution was drifting into a state of chaos. The Government should give effect to the desire of the people in the district who took a special interest in the institution by acceding to their request. The blind workers were quite prepared to meet the tender board in any class of work, and as the Government had large orders for this particular work from the various departments, a

proportion of it should be given to the institution. He would like to know whether the work had been given to the agents for foreign firms or to local manufacturers. Some foreign manufacturers turned out this work very cheaply and could compete against local manufacturers. This was the only avenue of employment open to blind workers. They did not want charity but they were prepared to work.

The PREMIER: The hon. member would appreciate the fact that he controlled the grant and when Parliament had passed it he merely saw that it was paid. He did not control the institution nor the various departments which made use of the material manufactured there. The tender board received tenders on the recommendation of various departments, and in most cases for material of this kind the approval of the Minister would not be required.

Mr. Lewis: They had a large share of it until last year.

The PREMIER: That point had not come under his notice. Some time ago it was pointed out that there was a big margin of difference in the prices of some of the items manufactured by the institution compared with those of outside firms, and the Tender Board were not prepared to recommend the acceptance of the institution's tenders. On other lines, wherever the work could be given to the institutions it was given to it, although there was an increase in the prices. There was strenuous competition in this business, but it could not be claimed that the Government were doing nothing for the institution when they provided for a grant of £500.

Mr. Lewis: Where have the orders been placed?

The PREMIER: As to that, he was not in a position to say.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You can control them if you like.

The PREMIER: That was quite correct. He could issue instructions that certain things be done, but was it suggested that he should issue instructions to the Tender Board, that they call for tenders, and that there should not

be consideration of any tender except that from this institution? It was not the duty of the Minister to go to the Tender Board and say, you must accept certain tenders, or why should there be a Tender Board? The Tender Board should not be interfered with, and the Government had not interfered with that board. If the hon. member would make representations to him he would approach the Tender Board and go into the question, and see that the institution was fairly treated. But the hon. member must not accept that as a promise that instructions would be issued by him, that the institution should receive the work and that they should have a monopoly. The institution should receive consideration; it was a good institution.

Item, Defalcations, £2:

Mr. ALLEN: Was it not the practice for officers to be guaranteed under a fidelity bond?

The PREMIER: One was not in a position to give that information. He did not carry this information about with him in his pocket, but if the hon. member wanted the information, he should ask a question and then would get a reply. If the hon. member would give notice of the question to-morrow, an answer would be given.

Mr. ALLEN: Certainly, notice of a question would be given. It seemed to him the Premier should be in a position to answer the question at once. There was one defalcation of £302.

The PREMIER: The £302 was not a vote for this year. It referred to the late registrar, School of Mines, Kalgoorlie, and was provided on the Estimates for last year. The only amount provided this year was one of £2, and it might be that the defalcation was originally £152 and that it had been met with the exception of the £2. If there was a bond to meet defalcations, then no vote was placed on the Estimates.

Item, Parks, Recreation Grounds, etc., Grants for Maintenance and Improvements—King's Park Board, £2,300, Coastal Grounds, etc., £1,000, Goldfields Grounds, £700—£4,000:

Mr. MUNSIE: It was to be regretted that the vote for parks and recreation grounds was not more fairly dealt with. Last year he had spoken on this question, and this year he found that of the £4,000 provided, £2,300 was for the King's Park, £1,000 for coastal grounds, leaving a total for the whole of the goldfields, the Murchison included, of £700. Where people were situated in a position such as in the goldfields area, a fairer distribution of the parks vote should be brought about. Did the Premier think it desirable that in the coastal areas £1,000 should be allotted although the people there had many pleasure resorts outside of the parks, and that only £700 should be allotted to the goldfields, where, outside the two racecourses of Kalgoorlie and Boulder, and perhaps he might include the racecourse at Coolgardie, there was no pleasure places at all. The £700 was out of proportion to the total amount provided on the Estimates. A question was asked last year on the Estimates, whether he (Mr. Munsie) would cut down the King's Park vote. He would be long sorry to see that done, but if he thought there was no other means of providing revenue to give the people on the goldfields means of providing pleasure resorts he would cut down the King's Park vote.

The PREMIER: The point that had to be kept in mind was that the Government had £4,000 for distribution. Under existing circumstances he was not prepared to agree to an increase of that amount. The distribution this year was on a different basis from that of previous years. In no year had anything approaching £700 been granted to the goldfields, and by reference to the public accounts the hon. member would see there was an increase from £570 last year to £700 this year. The word "coastal" did not cover the coastal districts only, it covered all the districts outside the goldfields. The hon. member would not call Beverley, Bibra Lake, Doodlakine, Goomalling, Harvey, Kodj Kodj, and other places, coastal areas. An application was made by the King's Park Board to increase their vote, but he had refused to agree to that. All

he had tried to do was to distribute the amount available as fairly as possible, keeping in mind that the people on the goldfields had not the same natural advantages as those in the coastal areas. Although there were many pleasure resorts in the coastal areas, we should remember that people could not play cricket and football on the river. The grounds had to be attended to in the coastal areas and the vote for the coastal areas covered the rest of the State, except the King's Park and the goldfields, which were represented by the Eastern Goldfields and Cue.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: While the Premier was away he (the Minister) had the distribution of this vote and he cut out with what was regarded as a ruthless hand in what were called the favoured localities grants asked for recreation reserves. The member for Claremont objected strongly because his requests were cut out last year; the member for North-East Fremantle objected, also the member for Bunbury, but there was only a certain amount of money to grant and it was far preferable to utilise that money as far as he could in making grants to districts where new reserves were being created in new localities, and where the people had little in the way of natural advantages. It must be remembered that many of the new farming districts in the eastern wheat belt were in areas which enjoyed a rainfall not much in excess of that of the goldfields. The vote was not a very large one, and it had to cover innumerable requests.

Item 32, Royal Commission, State Steamship Service, £50:

Hon. FRANK WILSON moved an amendment—

That the item be struck out.

The reason for this action was the farcical inquiry ordered by the Government, and which was appointed to whitewash their terrible administration. The evidence was so strong against the administration of the department, that in order that the public might not hear more about it the whole thing was squashed, the Commission was cancelled and no report was submitted to the

Governor. The Royal Commission having been appointed it was manifestly the duty of the Commission to bring in a report of some kind or other, even when it was decided in the interests, he presumed, of the department, that the inquiry should go no further. It was the duty of the Premier and his colleagues to have a report up to that time submitted. The evidence all went to show there had been maladministration, that the accounts in the office had not been kept up to date, they were largely in arrears, and that the finances of the department were in a state of chaos. No one knew, not even the manager or his officers, what the position was. Even the Government had not found out what the position of the department was. Members of the Opposition had endeavoured to get some satisfaction but had failed. The Government had stated that the information would be supplied in due course, but that meant when it suited the Ministers to supply it. This kind of answer tendered to create unrest and dissatisfaction, not only amongst hon. members, but also amongst people outside, who were beginning to lose heart in connection with these enterprises, more especially the State steamships.

Mr. Green: You have not lost heart yet.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes, so far as the administration of his friends opposite was concerned. In fact, he had never had any heart in regard to that administration.

Mr. Munsie: It was taken out of you on the 3rd October.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Fortunately there was another October approaching. The people were entirely dissatisfied with regard to this matter, and they felt that the inquiry was closed up with undue haste, and that a report of some sort, with the evidence which had been adduced, should have been presented. The Commission, of course, was appointed to pillory Mr. J. J. Holmes, and the Ministers thought by boldly announcing the appointment of the Commission, which, of course, was accepted by Mr. Holmes, they would be able to show

by the evidence that Mr. Holmes was wrong and that the department was being run in their opinion sufficiently well to justify them in getting a report which would exonerate the department from the charges which had been made. The evidence was so conclusive that the commissioners themselves, notwithstanding that two of them were members of the service, were perfectly satisfied, judging by their remarks, that the whole of the charges had been proved, and then we had the action of the Government in refusing to allow a report to be presented. It was a disgrace to the Government that that Commission should have been closed, and it was to mark his disapproval of that action that he had moved the amendment.

The PREMIER: It was to be hoped that the Committee would not agree to delete this item because the money had already been paid.

Mr. Male: We have had nothing for it.

The PREMIER: It was not his intention to debate the question which had been introduced by the hon. member more than to say that the Governor had the right to appoint a Royal Commission and to cancel that appointment if he desired to do so.

Hon. Frank Wilson: No he has not.

The PREMIER: That Royal Commission was appointed not for the purpose of giving hon. members a report. It was appointed for the purpose of satisfying those responsible for the administration of the department.

Hon. Frank Wilson: To satisfy the public and myself as one of the public.

The PREMIER: The hon. member was only an interested member of the public, and the Government did not appoint royal commissions to satisfy the will and whim of an interested section of the public.

Hon. Frank Wilson: But you did.

The PREMIER: But we did not. The health of the manager broke down and it was found also that it was not necessary for the Commission to sit further, and the Commission was cancelled. The amount on the Estimates was to clear up the expenses which were incurred.

Mr. MALE: The Premier had put up a very feeble excuse for the expenditure of this amount, and for which we had got nothing. The money had been wasted by the action of the Government. A Royal Commission was appointed for the purpose of inquiring into the management of the State Steamship Service, not the manager, and he declared that the management still required investigation, and it would cost much more than £50 to continue that inquiry. What was the feeling to-day? He was receiving letters continually referring to the method of the administration.

The Premier: You are looking for them.

Mr. MALE: Yes, and it was one of his duties to do so.

Mr. Turvey: In the interests of the company you represent.

Mr. MALE: And what did we find? That the service was most unsatisfactory.

The Premier: What about your own company's services?

Mr. MALE: What did we find in the newspapers? He had before him the copy of a newspaper which was not particularly interested in the Liberal party. In fact, the editor of that newspaper was more especially interested in the party opposite.

The Premier: There is no paper in such a position. What is the name of it?

Mr. MALE: The *Nor'-West Echo*, and he supposed that the editor of this paper was also proprietor of it.

The Premier: You are part proprietor.

Mr. MALE: No, nor was he interested in it in any respect. Unfortunately though he was interested in the State steamships.

The Premier: You are interested in that paper.

Mr. MALE: At the present moment he was. Unfortunately, the Premier did not like this reference to the steamship service, and he tried to throw a speaker off the track. The laugh of the Premier, if properly interpreted, was an uncomfortable one. It was not the laugh which Happy Jack took around the country with him.

The Premier: Let us hear that *Echo*.

Mr. MALE: Very well—

When the ill-fated Koombana was on this coast the people were well treated in regard to the storage of vegetables, fruit, etc., the only trouble being that enough cool storage space could not be obtained. This is of such vital importance to everyone in the Nor'-West that a howl of delight went up when the State Government announced that the "Western Australia" would have capacity for 100 tons cool storage, eh, what! It has never realised a tenth of the hopes, and this week most of the "cool storage cargo" for Broome had to be destroyed, being unfit for human consumption. Many butter cases were half empty, giving the impression they were stored on the boilers and not near the ice-chamber door. The ship landed a deal of her own stores for storage in Broome, maggoty rabbits, etc., which, to avoid prosecution by the health authority, had to be incinerated in a local boiler furnace. It is feared, in some quarters, that the ship has a fair chance of returning from Darwin with fever aboard.

The Premier in reply to a question admitted that the cool storage secured on the "Western Australia" had been unsatisfactory from the start. The Premier had also replied to a question in connection with the mails on the previous day, but if any of the other steamers failed to land mails within a reasonable time—

The Premier: On a point of order; was the hon. member in order in referring to a matter that could not possibly have been inquired into by the Royal Commission, because it had occurred since the Royal Commission had been cancelled?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member should confine himself to the item.

Mr. MALE: There would be other opportunities in the course of the Estimates to go further into the matter. With all due respect to the Chairman he was referring to the necessity for the continuation of the work of the Royal Commission, so that it might inquire into the management at the

present time of the State Steamship Service. The Premier thought fit to close down this commission, but at the same time the commission was in a difficult position, inasmuch as the members of it who were in the civil service would have been placed in a very unfair position if it had been necessary for them to call a Minister of the Crown, possibly their own Minister, to give evidence, and then to have to report against that Minister.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Has it never been done before?

Mr. MALE: It was a most unfair position to put those members of the commission in.

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

Ayes	11
Noes	24

Majority against .. 13

AYES.

Mr. Allen	Mr. Nanson
Mr. Broun	Mr. A. N. Piesse
Mr. Harper	Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Male	Mr. Wisdom
Mr. Mitchell	Mr. Layman
Mr. Moore	(Teller).

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. McDonald
Mr. Bath	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Carpenter	Mr. Muncie
Mr. Collier	Mr. O'Loughlen
Mr. Foley	Mr. Price
Mr. Gardiner	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Gill	Mr. B. J. Stubbs
Mr. Green	Mr. Swan
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Turvey
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Walker
Mr. Lander	Mr. A. A. Wilson
Mr. Lewis	Mr. Underwood
	(Teller).

Amendment thus negatived.

Mr. MALE: On last year's Estimates there had been an amount of £3,750 as a contribution towards the Admiralty survey of the North-West coast. As the survey was still being continued, why was no contribution provided for on the present Estimates?

The PREMIER: The vote had been provided for a period of three years under a guarantee given by the State

that £3,750 per annum would be provided for the survey of the North-West coast. The three years had expired, and no request had been received by the State to continue the contribution. Whether the work was to be continued or not he did not know.

Vote put and passed.

This completed the Estimates of the Treasury Department.

Lands Department (Hon. T. H. Bath, Minister).

Vote—*Lands and Surveys, £85,388:*

The CHAIRMAN: The general discussion on the Lands Estimates will be treated as a second reading debate in accordance with the decision previously arrived at.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. T. H. Bath): I think it will be preferable for me in this general discussion to cover the two votes, Lands and Surveys, and Woods and Forests. I have much pleasure in giving information in regard to the work of the department during the last twelve months. However, as evidence of the need for some settlement of the procedure in regard to the general discussion on the departmental Estimates, I may remark that the Premier in his Budget Speech gave considerable detail in connection with the work of the Lands Department. During the year ended the 30th June, 1913, the total number of locations taken up under the various conditions ruling under the Land Act was 8,099, covering an area of 22,800,465 acres, as compared with 7,076 locations in the previous twelve months, covering an area of 13,715,432 acres. I may point out that the increase is accounted for by the fact that a very considerable area of land was taken up, both as ordinary pastoral lease, and under Section 41A, which provides for leasing from year to year, in the district westward of Eucla. So far as rural selection is concerned the figures are as follows:— Under Section 55, that is residence conditions, in 1912 there were 1905 locations, covering an area of 791,844 acres, as compared with 1,534 locations covering an area of 510,195 acres in 1913; under Section 56 in 1912, 820,

holdings, covering an area of 387,212 acres, as compared with 381 holdings in 1913, covering an area of 148,534 acres; under grazing lease, in 1912, 727 holdings covering an area of 568,958 acres, compared with 765 holdings in 1913, covering an area of 585,382 acres; under homestead farms, in 1912, 1,290 holdings covering an area of 203,791 acres, compared with 965 holdings in 1913, covering an area of 151,985 acres. The totals under these four headings were—1912, 4,742 holdings covering an area of 1,951,805 acres, as compared with 3,645 holdings in 1913, covering an area of 1,396,096 acres. As regards holdings which are favourably situated in regard to reasonable approximation to railway communication, supply of water, and satisfactory rainfall, I may say that practically all the holdings which have been made available have been selected. Indeed, in a number of subdivisions there was a considerable excess of applications for the holdings made available. In regard to what may be termed the eastern fringe of the wheat belt, I, as Minister for Lands, decided, and my recommendation was approved by the Government, that a considerable area of land that had been subdivided should be withheld from settlement, mainly for the reason that it was distant beyond what we considered a reasonable margin from railway communication, or that the water supply was not satisfactory, or that the position in regard to rainfall was such as to raise a doubt whether, in existing circumstances, the settlers there could succeed. Of course, it has been urged that in many of these subdivisions where the people have been ruled out by the banks as being beyond the area where they will advance money, the department should not concern itself with this particular factor, but should make the subdivisions available and let the selectors take the risk. But in my opinion no Minister can take up the attitude of a Herod and wash his hands of all responsibility in regard to these subdivisions. Even if we were to say to possible selectors, "The land is there, the Agricultural Bank refuses to lend money on that

area, we cannot give you an assurance of railway communication within a reasonable period, we cannot say with any degree of certainty that over a number of seasons the rainfall is sufficient to enable you to succeed, but if you are willing to take the risk you can go right ahead"—even if we adopted that attitude we would find that the settlers would not allow a Minister to divest himself of responsibility. There would be repeated complaints to the Minister and to Parliament, and there would be innumerable letters, and the Minister taking up that attitude would soon find that he had to modify it considerably. As a matter of fact, there have been subdivisions in some of which money was advanced on the holdings, and others to which none was allocated by the bank, and from the selectors of those particular holdings on which the Agricultural Bank refused to specify the money it would advance, we have had much correspondence and many complaints that we had made it impossible for them to succeed on their holdings by reason of the attitude which the bank had adopted. And although it is pointed out that the attitude of the bank was understood when the land was selected, complaints are still made and those people contend that, even although it was made plain when the land was thrown open, the fact that they had gone on the land and effected improvements should induce the Government to go behind the bank and advance money on those holdings. I point out these facts merely to show the difficulty there is, and I thought it was preferable to withhold those subdivisions and gain experience as to the work of the selectors and the results accruing from that work on subdivisions already made available, so that we could draw conclusions from those results, and later on, if it were found that selection could be encouraged on those areas further out, the land could be made available with greater assurance and more confidence as to the future success of the selectors than was possible at the time when the subdivisions were withheld. I may say that at the end of 1912 ex-

clusive of the Perth area—and the figures were not then available—the total area of land subdivided and classified which I had decided to withhold from selection, was 1,178,475 acres, of which 687,386 acres was in the Northam district, 286,696 acres in the Geraldton district, 104,512 acres in the Narrogin district, 69,179 acres in the Albany district, and 30,700 acres in the Bridgetown district. Added to that there were lands in the Esperance district, including the area along the route of the proposed railway, temporarily reserved pending a decision in regard to the construction of the railway. The revenue of the department for the year ended 30th June, 1913, was £378,575, as compared with £376,747 in 1912, and I consider that this total was satisfactory bearing in mind that there was £70,000 outstanding, representing mainly amounts payment of which had been held over in order to assist the settlers to tide over the difficulties they had experienced in many of the eastern areas. During the year 1911–12 as hon. members are aware, there was an alteration in the system of dealing with town and suburban lands, and I may say that the results accruing from the altered system have been very satisfactory indeed. During the last year 1,486 town and suburban lots were taken up, and this was considerably in excess of the number disposed of in any previous year. The total receipts from those leases last year amounted to £1,921, of which £882 represented annual payments on the basis of the estimated capital value of the lots made available, and this at a calculation of four per cent. represents a capital value of £22,050. This, of course, represents an annual item which we will receive and which will grow as additional areas are made available. In addition to this annual rental of £882 we received £1,001 in the way of premiums. That is in those areas where the right of lease is put up to auction, a premium was received amounting to the sum I have mentioned. In connection with the area surveyed, I have figures for the past six years. In 1907–8 the total acreage stated in round figures was 910,000 : in the financial year 1908–9,

1,776,000 ; in 1909–10, 2,861,000 ; in 1910–11, 3,195,000 ; in 1911–12, 3,003,000 ; in 1912–13, 1,413,000. The cost per acre of contract surveys during the last financial year was 4·82d. as compared with 5·06d. in the previous financial year. I may state that during the last financial year we have carried out an extensive classification work in the timber areas in the south-western portion of the State, more particularly within the area covered by our karri forests, and I would like here to quote from the report of the district surveyor at Bridgetown upon the work done in the district under his control. He states—

The salaried staff and assistants have been almost wholly engaged on the classification of an area of 1,053,000 acres primarily to determine the outlines of our forest lands, but at the same time supplying the closest detailed information with regard to the quality of the land and the positions of all the natural features down to the minutest particular both within and without the forest areas. This is probably the finest cadastral survey that has been effected in Australia and, I think, reflects the greatest credit on the staff engaged. I think that any expert in the matter would find this opinion fully supported by the plans prepared, a number of which have been already lodged in the head office.

I might add in parentheses for the information of hon. members that I have placed on the Table a copy of the working plans showing the method of classification so that hon. members may see for themselves the work that has been accomplished in this direction. The report goes on to say—

In carrying out the work over this area the surveyors have, as shown on the return, laid out 268 miles of permanently marked traverses in addition to which, not shown upon the returns, they have run about 1,500 miles of compass and chain traverses, blazed and temporarily marked for the guidance of the forest rangers attached to the service. These latter officers (2) have been of the

greatest assistance in determining the boundaries of the forests and quantities of timber included, as they have supplied expert knowledge as to the qualities and contents of the logs standing upon the ground and in those cases where the surveyors were wanting in this knowledge, and have assured that we now have an approximately uniform estimate of the timber throughout the whole of the area dealt with. The whole staff has in carrying out this work become so expert that it is a matter for regret that we have not sufficient further areas of the same class of country to keep them in continuous employment. The result of this work should prove of immense advantage to the district and the State in enabling schemes to be prepared for both the exploitation of the timber and the settlement of the huge area of first class land of the district. I have not yet taken out the exact quantities of timber areas and their contents, nor the exact areas of first class land over the whole of the areas classified, but I find from inspection of the surveyors' working plans in hand that the position and extent of these agree closely with those as defined approximately, by rough horse-back traverse, in 1904. See my report on "Classification of country between Blackwood River and Wilson's Inlet," published by the department in 1906. In fact, at this date, I find but little to correct in the results and recommendations given in that report, except that I over-estimated the quantity of karri timber by perhaps 20 per cent. through including areas of forest which a closer examination shows to consist largely of inferior or perished trees, and correspondingly under-estimated the rich upland suitable for selection.

As a result of this classification work, a specimen of which is here for hon. members to see, the information obtained was of very great assistance to the Works Department in connection with the erection of the mills for the milling of karri, and also in laying out the tramlines necessary to bring the timber

to the mills. Moreover, it has enabled us to delimit the forest areas, and so to know specifically those areas we can subdivide for settlement without the necessity to have these afterwards inspected by various rangers, some of the locations, after subdivision, being reserved for forestry purposes. It is our intention in pursuance of this classification to have the areas not marked with timber subdivided and to make them available for settlement. In addition to the work carried out in the Bridgetown district we also had similar classification work carried out in the Albany survey district, more particularly that area of country to the westward of Denmark. The total area in that district classified in a similar manner to the Bridgetown district was 308,000 acres. I regret to say that the opinions formed as to the existence of a considerable area of country carrying marketable timber have not been realised as a result of this classification work. This I think is due to the fact that the road to Nornalup Inlet is carried along the fringe of this timber country and has led to exaggerated ideas of the quantity available. More specific classification has indicated that the areas are comparatively limited, that they are only a fringe to country carrying only poor timber of a character that is not likely to be used for saw milling purposes, at least in our time. During the year there has been a very large number of inspections and the amount of work entailed has been greater owing largely to the area over which these inspections have to be carried out, but it appears to me that the details given in the monthly *Statistical Abstract* as to the improvements effected on holdings in the way of scrub-clearing, fallowing, and ring-barking, showing a very satisfactory increase of over one million acres during last year, is an indication that the settlers are more and more realising the obligations entailed upon them and are carrying out improvement conditions to the best of their ability. Of course it is difficult to keep every one up to the mark because there is a conflict of opinion among those approaching

the department as to who should receive the first consideration. There are those people who are applying for Crown grants and always contend that their claim should have first consideration, and that inspection work should be set aside in order that their holdings may be inspected, but in my opinion the general work of inspection, that is, to see whether the settlers are carrying out the conditions under which the land was taken up, should hold pride of place, if any pride of place is given in connection with inspection work. There has also been of course a considerable increase in the work entailed on officers of the departments owing to the very large number of applications received from selectors for consideration in the way of extension of time for payment of rents. At the outset the extension was of a general character and we found that many of those who were not on their holdings, who had not cropped their holdings, and others who were in a position to pay, were claiming extension and in very many instances receiving it. This necessitated the appointment of a board to deal with applications as individual applications and of course while it was more satisfactory from the point of view of revenue, it entailed, as I said before largely increased work.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Do you obtain reports from the district as to whether they are living on their land?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We did at the outset, but found that the delay occasioned was altogether too great, and we then found it was advisable for the applicants to make their applications direct to the board appointed to deal with them. Of course the fact that so many extensions have been granted also complicates the work of the accountancy branch of the department, and very great care has had to be exercised to see that when selectors had been granted these concessions their holdings were not included in the forfeitable list. As a matter of fact the increase of work has been so great that we have found it necessary to get the assistance of the Public Service Commissioner and we have now consti-

tuted a small staff consisting of a capable officer of the department with the assistance of clerks and typists to deal almost entirely with work coming under the supervision of the seed wheat board. This board of course was first constituted to deal with applications for seed wheat, and afterwards we added to it applications for extension of rent. The small branch to which I have referred is working as a part of the Agricultural Department in view of the fact that the commissioner for the wheat belt, Mr. Sutton, has been chairman of the board since it was constituted.

[Mr. Male took the Chair.]

Mr. E. B. Johnston: It is a very good board, too.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There are several matters which have been raised during the course of this session which are the subject of motions before the House. I just wish to say briefly that in connection with the selection of leases infested with poison that on some subdivisions we have carried out reclassification work and the result has been that the first pricing was not very materially reduced. As a matter of fact the price in some locations was increased as a result of the reclassification, and I wish also to point out in justification of my own attitude on the question that I have specifically laid down that any areas of land infested with poisons, and more particularly in those areas where the land is taken up for grazing and where cultivation is not likely to be carried on with profit, that the existence of poison is to be taken into consideration in every case in the classification of that land, and only the other day the officers of the department, both the Under Secretary and the Surveyor General, assured me that that instruction was being carried out.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Hear, hear.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is to be borne in mind that there are considerable areas in the wheat-growing portion of the State which also carry poison. I may point out that on my own holding, owing to its proximity to a watershed that is badly infested with poison, from time

to time seeds have been washed on to the good land, and even rich salmon gum and gimlet lands were badly infested with poison, but no consideration, so far as those holdings are concerned, has been given to the existence of the poison, because the areas were taken up primarily for cultivation, and the carrying of stock is but a secondary consideration. In connection with the classification of the Eastern country and requests which have been made from innumerable sources for a reduction in the price of many of those areas, I have, up to the present time, refused to carry out a reclassification on the grounds which have been submitted, namely, that the results for 1911-12 have not been satisfactory. In my opinion it would not be fair to the State to carry out a reclassification on those grounds, but we have had experience in the season of 1910, although, it is true, very many of those areas were very little developed or were not developed at that time. We have had experience in 1911-12 and now with the experience of this season I think it will constitute a fair basis on which we can carry out a reclassification, and when the results of this season in those areas are known, I propose to give the question of reclassification consideration and to have such re-classification effected, although at the present time I am not prepared to say exactly how the board will be constituted. In connection with the Estimates for this year, I may point out that the estimate of expenditure for the last financial year was £90,353, and the actual expenditure £83,150, showing a saving of £7,203. The estimate for the present financial year is £85,388, or an increase of £2,238 over the actual expenditure of last year. I may point out, however, that when we take into consideration the increases given, namely, the regulation increases and increases to those receiving salaries under £204, the fact that we are providing for the appointment of certain inspecting surveyors and providing a special item of £1,000 for the payment of fees for bringing the land under the Transfer of Land Act, and also an item for the purchase of a motor car, it will be seen that these items in themselves represent the esti-

mated increase which is provided for, as compared with the actual expenditure of last financial year.

Mr. O'Loghlen: How about that hardy annual, the conservator of forests?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am coming to that shortly. In connection with this item "Fees for Transfer," this is due to the fact that strong representations were made by the Registrar of Titles that holdings should be brought under the Transfer of Land Act. It was pointed out that private banks were bringing holdings under that Act, and that the Agricultural Bank should follow their example. The Managing Trustee of the Agricultural Bank said he was not prepared to find the money, nor to ask the selectors to find it at a time when things were not prosperous with a large body of selectors. Consequently, as I recognised that it would be desirable to secure this uniformity of title, I decided that the Lands Department would place a sum on the Estimates and pay the fees for the transfer of holdings under the Transfer of Land Act mainly represented in the securities of the Agricultural Bank. This, of course, represents a bookkeeping item. It will show as expenditure on the Lands estimates, but will be represented as revenue received by the Lands Titles, which is under the control of my colleague, the Attorney General. In view of the fact that I thought it was desirable, I did not demur further to making that provision. The purchase of a motor car is due to the fact that representations have been made by the district surveyors that their work would be vastly facilitated, and that indeed they would be able to effect a saving in administration, if accommodated with motor cars. I was not prepared to make this provision for each of the district surveyors, but I decided that we would make a test in one district office, give the surveyor a motor car, keep a strict account of the cost of running it, also of the work accomplished, then, if we found it satisfactory, we could provide cars for all the district surveyors in order to facilitate their work.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: It has turned out a great success, I believe.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: In connection with "Woods and Forests" the increased expenditure is due to the fact that owing to the extended area over which the work of inspection is being carried out we have had to provide an increased staff. The fact that during this financial year the saw mills in the karri area will be in active operation will, of course, entail additional work on the Woods and Forests Branch, because the department controlling the saw mills will have to comply with the regulations and pay the fees and royalty as prescribed for private individuals and companies. The item which the member for Forrest (Mr. O'Loughlen) characterises as a hardy annual, namely, provision for the conservator of forests, appears again on these Estimates. The reason why the appointment has not been made is that I considered it was inadvisable to make such an appointment until we were prepared to find the funds for a more forward policy in connection with forest conservation.

Mr. A. A. Wilson: What about the man that is in it?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Well, of course, the point is that if at any time applications are called, the claims of the present acting head of the branch will have fair consideration with those of every other applicant for the position. Until the Treasurer can provide the funds which I would like to have at my disposal in connection with forest conservation work it is useless to build up an expensive staff. It was with great regret that, during the last financial year, I received an intimation from the Treasurer that it was undesirable to proceed with the work for which that £2,000 had been set apart.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Where did you propose to spend it?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: A portion of it on the Greenmount forest reserve. Our proposal was to utilise the better class of prisoners in our prison in connection with that work. We had actually prepared a scheme in connection with the Colonial Secretary's Department, and we had mapped out areas, called for reports, arranged as to the type of build-

ing which was to be put up for the accommodation of the prisoners, and had practically laid the plans for utilising a portion of that £2,000. But, unfortunately, as I say, the Treasurer pointed out that economy was necessary, and so this item was cut out.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Do you propose to erect a special building in which to house the officers, seeing that the present accommodation is totally inadequate?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member will realise that until funds are available for the erection of a block of public offices, not only for the Woods and Forests Branch, but for other branches of public departments which require better accommodation than they have—until circumstances warrant it, we are not justified in embarking on either revenue or loan expenditure in the erection of such public buildings.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Will you try to separate it further from the Lands Department?

Hon. J. Mitchell: It wants to be brought nearer to the Lands Department.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: At the present time I make a practice of consulting directly with the Inspector General of Forests on many important matters. The question of further separation has been considered, but the accountant's branch point out that it would be infinitely preferable if, instead of further separation, the accounts branch was brought into conjunction with the Lands Department. In view of that recommendation from Mr. Black, an officer in whom I have every confidence, no further separation is contemplated. The estimated revenue for the current financial year is £49,000, as compared with the actual revenue received last year of £47,670. This, in my opinion, is on the conservative side, and I expect that estimate will probably be exceeded. I have pleasure in submitting my Estimates for the consideration of hon. members.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN (Forrest): It was customary in discussing the annual Estimates for hon. members to deal with those

departments that particularly affected their electorates. For instance, agricultural members that night would discuss and review the operations of the Lands Department for the past 12 months. In this department was included woods and forests, to which he intended to direct his attention. The Minister had spoken of the activity that had been noticeable during the past 12 months and the buoyancy of revenue, and had indicated the increase obtained and forecasted the future. In regard to the revenue aspect of these Estimates, it was pleasing to see it steadily growing and to see recognition given to the industry which had produced so much to date, but if members read the report of the Conservator or Acting Inspector General they could come to only one conclusion, and that was that the buoyancy could not be continued owing to a decline in the exports. The export figures were dwindling. It might be difficult to arrest that decay in view of the present state of our forests. A good deal of the revenue derived by the department to-day was revenue that might well be remitted when times got better. He referred to the license fee charged to 1,200 or 1,500 sleeper cutters. Very few working men had to pay for the right to work, and seeing that the present Government in many instances had reduced or abolished altogether charges which had been levied in certain directions—he might mention spur lines where by one stroke of the pen the Government deprived themselves of about £20,000 per annum, and, again, the fees charged at mining and other schools which had been wiped out—if the Government were going much further on these lines, in view of the present state of the finances, it was only a fair proposition to extend that policy all round. The 1,600 hewers to-day operating in our forests and paying 30s. a year license fee had felt for a considerable time past that it was rather an unfair impost and were looking forward to a reduction of the license fee, or to its abolition. A half-a-crown a month was not a very big item but it was a considerable factor in making up the Estimates of revenue with which the Minister had dealt. Dealing with the proposed ap-

pointment of a conservator of forests, this item had been on the Estimates for the last five or six years at any rate, and the present Government appeared to be in the same position as their predecessors. They were afraid, evidently, to incur this expenditure to get a man for the position until they were in a position to put a forest policy into operation. He regretted that according to the Minister's statement the forest policy could not be launched. He recognised the difficulties, but desired to point out that this matter could not be delayed much longer. The Minister had said that so far as the particular gentleman who would be required for the post was concerned, it would be of no use appointing him unless the money was provided to enable him to launch out in the direction that a forest policy would indicate. He (Mr. O'Loughlen) recognised the difficulty of getting a suitable man for the post. He did not wish to make any disparaging remarks about the present occupant except to contend that he ought to be told something definite. He was on the list as Acting Inspector General—

Mr. George: How long has he been acting?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: For 10 or 12 years, and he was either fit to hold the post or he was not. He (Mr. O'Loughlen) was not making any complaints about the administration. He believed it would be possible to get a stronger man, but to get a man with a thorough knowledge of forestry matters was a difficult task. This difficulty was experienced in all the States of Australia, and even the hon. member for Northam, when Minister for Lands, experienced the difficulty. That hon. member picked up experts by the dozen in the Eastern States and appointed them, but when it came to a forest expert evidently he could not succeed because there was a great dearth, not only in Australia but throughout the world, of men capable of laying down a policy and effectually carrying it out.

Mr. George: How long would it take one to get to know our timbers?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It would take him a long time. A man would have to have

a knowledge of our local timbers and of jarrah which grew only in Western Australia. We had an opportunity of getting rather a bright man three or four years ago when the leader of the Opposition was in power, but he regretted to say that the negotiations were broken off. He referred to Mr. Norman Jolly. That gentleman was induced to come to the State to take up an appointment in the Modern School. He was then engaged in the Forestry Department of South Australia; he had had a good deal of experience of the forests of Germany and had taken lessons in many of the Continental countries. He seemed to be the right man as he was a young, vigorous and energetic officer and well equipped. He was appointed to the charge of the Modern School, but negotiations were broken off and Queensland, which was on the lookout for a competent man, obtained his services and he was now the conservator of forests in that State.

Mr. George: What was his superiority over the acting man?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: In his general knowledge of forestry matters. The hon. member would not claim that the present man had that field knowledge which was absolutely necessary if we had the money available to go ahead as we ought to do.

Mr. George: I do not think he has had a chance.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: He has a good knowledge of local conditions.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The present occupant of the office had not had much chance up to the present and was not getting much chance to-day. He could not compliment the Government on giving him much more freedom than other Governments had done. There was a tendency to subordinate the whole question of forestry to that of land settlement, and we found a continual conflict of opinion between the settler on the one hand and the timber getter on the other whether the timber getter was an individual or a company. From the Minister's expression of the opinion of Mr. Black, the coming under-treasurer, he gathered

that so far as the accounts were concerned there should be an even closer amalgamation than existed at present. If that was proposed he would fight it strenuously. If he could prevent it, he would not allow any further amalgamation or linking up between these two departments. He would rather separate them. Mr. Black might be able to give an opinion from the accounts point of view, which would be valuable, but he had no knowledge of field work or the difficulties which cropped up every day in the timber areas. He had received no fewer than a dozen letters in the past fortnight from settlers who had taken up a little piece of ground and who wanted an additional area in order to build a home. These settlers on submitting their claims to the forest ranger had found themselves confronted with the report that there was young jarrah growing on the areas and consequently their applications were turned down. In 99 cases out of 100 if a forest ranger said there was marketable timber, or that land would grow a better crop of jarrah than anything else, he would stand behind that ranger. But in many places where young jarrah was just starting and would take 100 years to come to maturity it was not fair to leave the settler hampered by so small an area if a few acres would enable him to reap success. We had millions of acres along the granite ridges which grew the best jarrah that could be grown and which could be reserved for the purpose, while giving these settlers a chance to get a living area. Only that evening he had received one of these letters, written from the North Dandalup district. The writer applied for a small block and the reply he received was that the block was reserved for timber. He (Mr. O'Loughlen) knew the block and there was no timber that would be called timber by any man in the industry. As this settler had written, the man who would reserve that area for timber purposes would reserve an area in the tropics for the breeding of polar bears.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): Does not that show that the Forestry Department are watching the timber?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The Forestry Department might be watching the timber, but sufficient common sense and discretion were not exercised by the officers. They were prepared to close down settlement in every instance where the two might be worked together. He did not want any hard and fast or drastic action to be taken, but where settlers were located and the timber was cut out, and there was no possibility of the bush making good in under a century, the officer should exercise more discretion. At the same time we could not get the proper classification until this department was given a separate existence. To-day the applications instead of being dealt with by the Inspector General, had to go through the hands of half a dozen officers in the Lands Department, men who were not conversant with the actual position and there was frequent delay and disappointment in consequence. He was pleased that the reclassification of the karri areas had been undertaken by the Government and practically completed. He regretted that the area which we were supposed to possess was not as large as was thought. He regretted that the surveyors' report in that direction was disappointing. He believed that much could be done in the direction of getting a more accurate knowledge of the wealth of our timber by means of this classification than was possible before. He hoped the department would extend its operations in the planting of soft woods and other timbers. He had never advocated the planting of hard woods. In Germany it was an obligation that anyone utilising the timber there must plant three trees for every one he destroyed. That would be impossible in Western Australia and it was also unnecessary. In this State nature was so prolific and if given the assistance of a policy which would make not for the planting of hardwood but for the policing of the timber areas which we possessed, nature would do the rest. He believed the Government should do something in that direction to set apart the cut out areas, and by expending a little money in cutting out the trees that were sapping the moisture from the ground and would not come to anything, and thus giving prom-

ising trees a chance, they would bring the forests back again to a reproductive stage. While he did not advocate the planting of hardwoods, he complimented the department and the Government on having planted about 100,000 pines. There were now 700 acres of plantation at Ludlow and there were other parts of the State, particularly the Albany district, where the sand dunes would grow pines to perfection. We had had reports galore on this question and the experience of South Australia was sufficient to prompt us to further efforts. When he was a boy running around his native town, a big area was planted with pines; when he returned there 12 months ago those pines had reached maturity and were being cut by the State sawmill and the conservator of forests had told him he was getting a revenue of £200 an acre from those pines. There were enormous possibilities before the State in the direction of pine culture. The State was the only party that could take this on. A private individual could not do it, because he could not afford to await the time before the plantation became reproductive. Consequently, this policy should be vigorously pushed ahead by the State. He also hoped in regard to wattle culture that the wattle leagues which had come into existence of late would make the question a live one, because Australia to-day was the home of the wattle, and the wattle was one of the trees which had been neglected. It was only a few years since Natal imported a quantity of wattle seed from Australia, and, as a result of planting that seed in various parts of Natal, that country last year exported £164,000 worth of bark. The tanning properties of the wattle bark were recognised throughout the world, and if it was good enough for Natal to get such a revenue from the bark which had been stripped from the trees, the seed of which had been obtained in Australia, it was surely good enough for the people of Australia to cultivate that national bloom, and obtain a similar revenue from it.

Mr. George: But does not the question of black labour come in in Natal?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: To some extent, he was prepared to admit that there was

something in what the hon. member said. It had to be remembered though that the wattle tree required very little attention and he believed that we could lay down plantations here in much of our country that was not producing anything, and this would prove profitable to our settlers.

Mr. George: Is not the expense in the stripping?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Not very much.

Mr. George: I think it is all in the stripping.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The preparation of the ground was the biggest expense.

Mr. George: No.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The hon. member could express his ideas at a later stage. Whether what the hon. member had stated was the case or not, the department should be given the opportunity to experiment in this direction. It was to be regretted that the Forestry Department of this State was hardly worthy of the name. There were no buildings in which to house the officers of the Department, and they had been hunted from pillar to post and from one block to another, until to-day they were without what might be called a home. One could go into the buildings at the Town Hall, and in a lumber room there would find many exhibits, many of historical value, lying right away from the public gaze, and absolutely being destroyed. In a country like this, possessing the forest wealth it did, and which advertised to the world the wealth which was contained in its forests, and the immense varieties of timber it had, it was hardly a good advertisement for the State if any man interested in the industry came here and he was not able to see to the best advantage the exhibits of timber which were in the possession of the department, and especially if he was not able to get into immediate touch with the department which had control of the industry. He regretted that the poverty of our finances prevented justice being done to the department in the direction of properly housing the officers, and in the direction also of appointing a live and active officer, and displaying to the best advantage the

various timbers which had done so much for Western Australia in the past, and which with proper supervision, would mean as much in the future. This was a subject on which he could talk for hours, and hon. members knew that he had dwelt on it at length on more than one occasion. Unless money was found to bring back to a reproductive state our cut areas, and to bring back the wealth-giving possibilities of our forests which had been depleted so much during recent years, unless something was done in this direction, the State would suffer considerably. With the object of making the industry a permanent one there had sprung into existence here lately an organisation called the Western Australian Forest League. The public no doubt were getting tired of the numerous organisations which were in existence, but if there was one above all others that should justify its existence it was this newly-formed Western Australian branch of the Australasian Forest League. The objects of the League need not be enumerated further than to say that the principal one would mean the existence of a vigilance committee that would direct the attention of the public to the value of the industry, awaken public conscience, and galvanise into activity members of the Government and bring under notice the urgent necessity for making provision for posterity. That provision was not being made to-day. All over the world there was a famine in timber supplies, and we in Western Australia were practically the only State that could say we could look ahead with confidence to a few years. A few years however were not enough in the life of a nation, and our object should be to introduce a policy that would cover the whole timber industry, and a policy which would have the effect of making provision not only for the conservation of timber in our rural areas, but would see also that a certain quantity of timber was kept for shade purposes, and that we should go ahead with the planting of soft woods. Then in years to come the people of Western Australia, dependent as they

were to a great extent on timber supplies, as well as the people of the Commonwealth, would appreciate the fact that some organisation, perhaps imperfect, perhaps lacking in many things, had come into existence to compel Governments to do their duty.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington): It was with regret that he had missed hearing the remarks of the Minister for Lands when introducing the estimates of his department. But, so far as the lands were concerned, he had not much to say except that he noticed the department had pointed out the fact that some millions of acres of land had been taken up during the twelve months. If, however, the area of land which had been taken up in the Eucla country and what had been called the Eucla Land Grab were taken out of the figures which had been quoted it would be shown that very little land indeed had been dealt with in what might be termed a legitimate way, or in connection with legitimate land settlement. In fact so small was the quantity as compared with the land settlement which had taken place during the regime of previous governments that it seemed almost a burlesque to put forward such a statement as had been done by the Minister. His principal reason for rising was to support the remarks made by the member for Forrest, and he congratulated that hon. member upon having placed before the House and the Government the necessity for attending to probably one of the most important industries which existed to-day. The timber industry of Western Australia had not, in his opinion, been regarded as being of the great importance it really was. The number of men engaged in that industry, either at the mills or as hewers was very large indeed, and if the Minister had the figures he would realise the necessity for dealing with the industry in a more generous manner.

Mr. O'Loughlen: He has too many departments to control.

Mr. GEORGE: If the Minister for Lands was overloaded with departments some means should be found by the Gov-

ernment to see that an industry like the timber industry should not suffer because the Minister controlling it was overworked. To the South-Western portion of the State the timber industry was of vital importance, and he assured the House that the near approach of the cutting out of the Worsley mill was viewed with considerable trepidation by the settlers in that district. They knew that where these timber settlements were, there was a ready market for produce, a market which was needed and which was appreciated. The Worsley mill was a comparatively small one, but in the South-Western district anything that might hinder the progress of timber cutting could not but be regarded as of vital importance. So far as the present occupant of the position of Acting Conservator of Forests was concerned, that gentleman had been there a number of years. The present and past Governments had neglected to do their duty in the direction of placing someone in control of the industry. They seemed to have lost sight of the importance of looking after this industry. Whether the gentleman who occupied the position of Acting Conservator was competent to fill it or not, only those who had had dealings with him could form an opinion.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: He has been there for 12 years, and ought to know his business now.

Mr. GEORGE: That officer had always been not only courteous but desirous to do anything that could be done to help those who wanted assistance, and he (Mr. George) had always found him a very well read man and thoroughly well up in timber matters. If he might be permitted to criticise that officer at all, he would say that the point upon which he might be lacking was knowledge of outdoor work, which he had been prevented from acquiring by reason of the amount of red-tape in which he had been swathed for years past. When we did get the right man for the position of Conservator of Forests, it would be wrong for any Government to ignore the industry which had done so much in the past, and which would yet do a great deal

for Western Australia. If the present occupant of the position had not the requisite knowledge and was not the man of the calibre which was required to properly fill the position, the State had a right to say to the Government that they should find someone who could properly fill the post.

Mr. Harper: I think it would be difficult to find a better man than Mr. Richardson.

Mr. GEORGE: That too, was his opinion, but he was drawing attention to the matter from the point of view of the importance of the industry and the necessity for immediately filling the position. The timber industry was supporting between 20,000 and 25,000 people in the South-West. It might be said that nearly ten per cent. of the population were dependent on the industry. Surely, therefore, it was worthy of more attention than it had received in the past. He was delighted to find the interest which was being taken in the matter by the member for Forrest. In connection with the same industry there was another matter to which the Minister might direct his attention with profit to the State and with advantage to many of the people in it. The number of inspectors who had to look after the carrying out of the regulations had been stinted for years past. The department appeared to be particularly fortunate in having a number of inspectors who understood their business and who could be relied upon to do their duty, but the fault had been that there had not been a sufficient number of them, and those who were in the service of the State had not been able to spread themselves over the immense area of timber lands. The Minister might very well take into consideration, when he had the opportunity of doing so, the necessity for appointing additional inspectors, and these appointments would not only be of benefit to the industry, but would have the effect of bringing in more revenue than the department was receiving at the present time.

The Minister for Lands: I have increased the number.

Mr. GEORGE: The Minister might even go further in that direction. In connection with these timber inspectors, the department might also find it judicious—certainly it would be just—to increase the allowances to these officers.

The Minister for Lands: They, too, were increased.

Mr. GEORGE: There were a number of men called upon to inspect sleepers and timber for export, who were taken away from their homes in Perth or in the district for a few days or even a week. On an allowance of something like 4s. 6d. or 6s. a day they could not do more than pay their way, even if they could do that much, and seeing the immense amount of responsibility placed on those men who were in the position of judges and had the right to put the State's hall mark on the timber showing whether it was good or not, they should be treated far more generously than they had been in the past. The State had every reason to be proud of the calibre of the inspectors, because he believed they were men whose sense of duty was very high indeed. He rather rejoiced to see that the Government had seen fit to extend the operations of various timber mills into what was known as the flora and fauna reserve. He had sat in Parliament when the late Mr. Throssell created that reserve, and he had never considered it justified. He was glad, therefore, that the present Government had seen their way to break up the reserve to some extent, but he was not altogether satisfied that there had not been a certain amount of favouritism in the cutting up of the reserve. He believed that there had been applications from men whose positions were on all fours with those of persons to whom concessions were given, and he would like to know why permission to cut in the flora and fauna reserve had been refused to certain individuals and granted to others. He would also like to make inquiry in regard to the closing of Karridale. Millars' Timber and Trading Company, who had absorbed the old M. C. Davies Company established at Karridale many years ago, had operated a large mill there, and there had been a

fairly large population resident at Karri-dale; yet for some reason or other, although there was plenty of timber land on which the company could have been granted the right to cut, the Government had refused to give it to them. They preferred to throw practically out of employment an old settlement like Karridale, which had something like 250 inhabitants, and to cause them to leave the place where many of them had been born and all of them had lived for many years, to seek employment in another part of the State. It might be urged by the Government that they could see no reason why Milliar's Company should be given any further area for cutting when the Government were committed to cutting karri in that district, but that was no warrant whatever for practically uprooting a settlement of so many years standing. If the Government had viewed the matter as they should have done, they would have granted the company some concession by which they could have continued cutting. When the Government mills would start cutting timber, he could not say, but that did not seem likely to happen in the near future. But, however that might be, his point was that where there was a settlement, the Government should not by any fanciful ideas uproot that settlement and force the people into other parts of the State to make homes and seek their livelihood. It was the duty of every Government to assist any industry, provided that in assisting that industry they were doing no wrong to the individual or to the State finances, and he thought the Government were considerably to blame when they caused that settlement of so many years to be broken up for what could be termed nothing more than a fanciful idea that the land would be required for the cutting of timber by the Government. Assuming that the Government did not cut timber, was it nothing that the continuance of employment should be interfered with, and that old associations should be broken up? Had that action been taken because there was some particular vendetta or feeling against the Company? No matter who the company were, if they were giving employment, paying good wages, and

paying their debts, they had a right to be dealt with fairly and justly and without political bias or bitterness. Even if the company were not in the good graces of the present Government the employees of the company belonged to the party which had made the Government of to-day, and if there was no consideration due to the employers who found the capital, at least there was consideration due to the men who had worked there for a daily wage, who had established themselves in that settlement, whose children had been born there, and who had then to break up their homes and go to other portions of Western Australia to find work. Again, if the reason for not enabling the company to continue their operations was prejudice, either well-founded or ill-founded, where was the justification for the Government purchasing the railway to the concession? If the Government were pursuing the plan that all persons who employed labour must necessarily be wrong in doing so, and that it would be better for the company to go, why did the Government assist the capitalist by purchasing a line for which there was no use except in connection with the timber industry? It was too late for the Government to do anything now in connection with the matter, but should a similar case occur he hoped the Government would pause and think well over the circumstances before they adopted any proposal which would cause a cessation of employment of any body of men in any portion of the State. To the South-Western district the timber industry was practically of primary importance and the cessation of it must mean for many years a considerable drawback and hindrance to the progress of the various settlers. The farmers of the South-West were producing what other people required for their daily sustenance; they were not like the farmers of the Eastern districts, producing wheat for export, but were producing the food required from day to day, and he trusted that whatever might be the policy of the Government they would remember that far above party politics and prejudice was the fact that the worker had a right

to have his work not interfered with and his home not broken up. There had been considerable talk and writing about the necessity for work being done in connection with re-afforestation. It was at last becoming understood by the men who had looked into the matter that so far as both karri and jarrah were concerned, it was only a question of time when nature itself would do the work better that it could be done by man. The very process of timber-getting hampered the forest with the debris that was left. The top and butt of a tree would practically represent more than 50 per. cent of the original tree, and that big proportion of timber was left on the ground and not dealt with. Years ago he had suggested that it should be the duty of the timber companies to see that the debris was cleared up so that there should be an opportunity for the young trees to grow, but apparently nothing had been done or was being done. Reafforestation by natural means in the jarrah forests was a problem of very great import to the farmer and struggling settler, and he was satisfied that with reasonable care the reafforestation of the whole of the jarrah forests was a matter that need not cost a great amount of money, but was only a question of a few years. He could give many instances which had come under his notice, but it was unnecessary to do so. He only desired to commend to the attention of the Minister the necessity for looking after the timber industry in all its branches.

Mr. A. N. PIESSE (Toodyay): There was no more important vote on the Estimates than that of the Lands Department. With regret he noticed there was again a lack of confidence on the part of the Minister in a large area of vacant Crown lands. He quite realised that there was a big difficulty, and owing to the lack of information, the Minister was anxious that he should go warily and make no blunders; but from his knowledge of a large portion of the million acres to which the Minister had referred he was convinced that it was a safe and sound agricultural proposition, provided that assistance was forthcoming which he

maintained was due to the men who settled that country. Certainly it was not a Paradise or an Eden, but it was a good prospect, and if as much consideration was given to the settlers as was due, he felt sure that the country would progress more rapidly and soundly than many people anticipated. He must make, but not in any spirit of complaint, a comparison as to the assistance given to other industries as compared with that given to the man developing that country, which, as he had again and again stated, was only quite recently almost a worthless asset, or was considered so anyhow. He regretted that the Minister had not felt it his duty to support the question of a select committee which he (Mr. Piesse) had asked for quite recently in this House, to inquire into the condition of the people settled on what were known as the far eastern agricultural areas. From that source he felt sure, if a committee had been appointed, we should have gained a considerable amount of information which would have been of material value to the Administration, particularly in the matter of reclassification. That was absolutely necessary, and he was glad to know that it was the intention of the Minister to proceed with a reclassification at, it was understood, an early date, but he hoped that reclassification would not be on the lines the Minister had already stated this evening, when an inquiry was made into some of the poison leases and the rent was raised in price.

The Minister for Lands: Not poison leases, conditional purchase.

Mr. A. N. PIESSE: To such a thing he would be strongly opposed, because, as was well known, it required the best of blood and sinew and a considerable amount of capital to develop the country, and if the burden was to be increased from a financial point of view we had better at once drop the re-classification. There was every justification for re-classification, and he hoped that when it was brought about that in the majority of instances the land would be reduced at least one-half the value that was now placed upon

it. It could not be denied that the future progress of the country, its permanent prosperity, would depend upon the speedy development of its large agricultural areas, particularly those which were now lying vacant. In his own district there was something like half a million acres which was to all appearances worthless, but results were rapidly proving that that country was valuable once it was intelligently worked. He was glad indeed that the Minister had thought fit to throw open that country, or a portion of it, and he hoped the whole of it would be thrown open at an early date at a much reduced price. He would like the Minister to be seized of the grave issues that were depending upon his administration of this department. It was absolutely necessary that the matter of land settlement be not viewed from the revenue point of view, because it was well known that the Premier had again and again stated that with a good harvest things would speedily righten, which showed how much depended on the agricultural resources of the country, and he (Mr. Piesse) maintained that the time had come when there should be no hair-splitting. With reference to the question of the repurchase of estates, he had quite recently brought under the notice of the Minister two valuable estates. One, freehold, was offered to the Government at a reasonable price and a price at which, if the land was cut up, would enable it to be sold at a profit. That land was lying comparatively idle, whereas if purchased by the State it could be made to support at least seven or eight farmers in prosperity, as had been the case with the Norman estate. To his mind it was the duty of the Minister for Lands to repurchase these estates and sub-divide them. There was another on the north of Bolgart, no doubt one of the best agricultural districts of Western Australia. There was land offering there at a much lower figure than the freehold estate he had mentioned just now and unfortunately the Minister had not seen fit to negotiate for the purchase of that block. No doubt the excuse would be made that it was a matter of funds. With all due consideration he submitted to the Minister that it

was the duty of the State to find that money. Money could be found for workers' homes, not that he begrudged it, but workers' homes did not materially affect the progress of the country, as did the repurchase of estates. He sincerely hoped the Minister would see his way clear to repurchase these estates and cut them up, as it would be good business.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: Bad business.

Mr. A. N. PIESSE: Probably that opinion was due to the hon. member's lack of knowledge. It would be good business, as it would mean the employment of considerable labour and the advancement of the country.

Mr. Foley: Not if one man buys them all up again.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: Some land has been repurchased twice in ten years.

Mr. A. N. PIESSE: That sometimes happened, but if we took the whole of the repurchased estates we would find that nine out of ten remained in the hands of small holders.

Mr. Foley: For how long?

Mr. A. N. PIESSE: While on the subject of repurchased estates he ventured to say that Yandanooka, now being held by the State for the fattening of stock for the Government meat-shops, would, if cut into small areas, be much more profitable and of more benefit to the State.

The Minister for Lands: A large quantity of it is cut up.

Mr. Moore: Why don't you sell it?

The Minister for Lands: The trouble has been over mineral rights.

Mr. A. N. PIESSE: The development of the back country depended upon the financial assistance that could be forthcoming. He felt that the trustees of the Agricultural Bank, with due regard to their judgment, were losing confidence in the far eastern agricultural areas, but there was no justification for that lack of confidence. The security was a sound one, as no doubt if any man threw up his lease there would quickly be another to take it up. If the select committee which had been asked for had gone to work we would quickly have proved to the Minister that

the deferring of the repayment of land rents now in arrears was a reasonable and proper suggestion as, if the people were relieved of that liability temporarily they would be more easily able to keep up their instalments to the Agricultural Bank. The leaseholders said they were not in a position to pay the Agricultural Bank instalments and the land rents. They recognised that if they paid the Agricultural Bank instalments it would practically mean that their lease would have to be forfeited. The Minister should realise that if the rents were deferred the Agricultural Bank instalments would be forthcoming more speedily, as it was impossible for the people to pay the two amounts that were in arrears. As regarded the confidence of the managing trustees of those lands, he maintained that there was every justification for further financial assistance, because the security was there, and the presence of these people on the land was sufficient to further increase the value of that security. They were day by day toiling on the land enhancing its value, and therefore he maintained that it was absolutely necessary for the Administration of this day, or any other day, to find money for the people who were settling that back country, and he was sure from his knowledge of agriculture that with proper farming, and not very costly farming at that, with the early wheats that were being bred to-day, we would see within the next ten years a large and prosperous settlement in that back country as, notwithstanding the patchiness of the rain, the majority of the seasons were good. He would like to say one word for the farmers in the matter of the burdens they carried, but he would speak later on when the opportunity occurred concerning the water rates, which he maintained were an unjust burden upon the people holding land approximate to these pipes. He would like to endorse the remarks of previous speakers with regard to the re-forestation of our forest lands. From his own knowledge of the forests he considered there was little hope of restoring the forests for many years to

come, and probably centuries, owing to the fact that fires which followed the cutting down of the timber were very fierce and destroyed all the half grown timber. He maintained that were the farmer could settle the soil at the expense of the destruction of the forests, let the farmer settle the lands. The value of the man on the land was much greater than the forest was likely to be for many years. He would like to see further activity in the matter of planting pines. That was undoubtedly a valuable timber, and to-day we paid as much as 8½d. for a fruit case in its unmade condition.

Hon. J. Mitchell: What about using karri?

Mr. A. N. PIESSE: It was not a good thing to put soft fruit into. His experience of hard timbers was that they were not suitable for soft fruits, as the handling they got on the railways—although he believed a majority of the men were careful in the handling of fruit—was such that the hard case would certainly damage the fruit more than would happen with a soft wood case. He would like to see further pines planted, and would favour some thousands of acres being planted.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam): We had come to the most important department in the Estimates—the Department of Lands. There was no department that meant so much to the people of this state or to the State generally. We had listened to the tale told by the Minister, although not with any degree of satisfaction, because after all it had been a very doleful tale. It was hard to realise that in so short a time so much could have happened to justify the Minister in coming down to the House with the tale which had been listened to. The Honorary Minister was bringing out people month after month. This was quite right, but if these people were to be kept in permanent work the Lands Department must do it. The goldfields of Western Australia were magnificent, and the Minister for Mines should be a proud man. How much prouder should

be the Minister for Lands, controlling the great resources of agriculture, timber, and the pastoral industry. The Minister might have told a cheerful tale of prosperity and future greatness, but the Minister had missed the opportunity and had nothing cheerful to say at all. In fact, the Minister had brought down a comparison which spelt disaster, had compared the figures of to-day with the figures of the past, and without a word of apology or explanation had shown that whereas in 1910-11 an area of 3,200,000 acres of land had been surveyed, and in 1911-12 this area had increased to 3,300,000 acres, yet last year the Minister had surveyed only 1,400,000 acres; and this, without a word of apology, was the tale told by the Minister. What had happened? Why had we shut up? Why were our surveyors not here? Why had they been sent away? Why had they been denied work when work was plentiful? A year or two ago the present Minister for Lands, the Attorney General and others had taken him (Hon. J. Mitchell) roundly to task because he had not a block of land ready for every man who wanted one, because there was not a thousand-acre block waiting for every person who desired to go on the land. Members had brought their friends to him in the department and had rated him in the House. He had done his best to get surveyors and had brought to the State every available licensed surveyor that Australia had. He had cut up over three million acres of land each year for two years, but now suddenly we had dropped by more than 50 per cent., and this drop had been brought about by the very man who had criticised him for not having more surveys ready made. It was true that there was not the same demand for land as there had been; nor would there be until the Liberal party again got into power. The demand had fallen off because of a want of confidence, brought about by the administration of our friends. He did not wish to refer again to the famous regulations issued by the Minister for Lands, because those regulations had already been discussed. In those days men had faith in the country.

They had known that they were perfectly safe in selecting land. They had believed they had something good before them. To-day, however, they were sorry that they had taken up the land, because their difficulties had been increased by the actions of the present Minister. In those days the selectors had been trusted, and there was no class in the community more trusted than the West Australian farmer. When a man secured a block of land he was given credit, and the storekeepers were perfectly willing to trust him. He knew hundreds of men who had made their way to success on the land, although starting without any money at all. The great majority of the farmers who had made money in this State had started with very little capital. The people had had confidence in them because they believed in the security of the land, and believed in the honesty of the land man as a class. This was changed because the present Minister had declared that the new selector was not to have the same value in his land as security as had obtained before. The land value had been damaged ruthlessly by Ministerial action, and the credit of the selector impaired. He knew that this credit was sometimes abused. It sometimes happened that an agent, over-zealous, had forced machinery on people. It had sometimes happened that an inexperienced farmer had bought machinery which he was not ready to use. Still it had been possible for settlers to carry on much more easily under the management of the Liberal Administration than they had since been able to do, and the loss of credit had not only retarded land settlement but it had retarded development generally. It was useless for the Minister to tell him that a great deal more had been done than ever before. Under the system of sale after selection, as approved by the Liberal Administration, a bank balance had been guaranteed with the land sold. It had been said time and again that men were induced to take up land not of first class quality. He had been aware of that, and immediately after taking office had set up a system of classification upon survey, and produced, for the guidance of

those selecting, a map coloured to show the quality of the land offered. He had marked the prices of the land clearly upon this, and submitted the plan to the Agricultural Bank, whereupon the Agricultural Bank wrote on each block the amount it was willing to advance as a start for the selector. The plan which he now produced showed an area lately cut up under this system, and which was to be opened on the 12th instant. On this plan was a 1,000-acre block valued at 18s. an acre, against which the bank was willing to advance £350. Could there be any deception about this? This was the policy which the Liberal Government had established, and now the present Administration were carrying it on. We were told that land had been marked far beyond its value. Here we had exactly the same pricing going on to-day. It was quite time that misrepresentation should cease. We heard a great deal about hypocrites. It was time the Minister realised that the late Administration had been fair to the people, and that nothing more could have been done than was done to disclose the true position in regard to land and the conditions of land settlement. He (Hon. J. Mitchell) had been charged with settling men, not upon the land, but settling their prospects. It was high time this humbug should cease, and that the people in the country were told the truth in regard to this question. Why had we deliberately damned the country? Why had we damned the back country? Why had the Minister said that settlement was proceeding too far east? The map he now produced was that of an eastern area recently subdivided under the very same conditions. The Minister had told the Committee to-night that he did not like settlement so far east. Here was a selection east of Merredin, right out on the rabbit-proof fence, absolutely on the extreme edge of the settlement which had taken place, but which we were told ought not to have taken place, in his time. The very extreme of the South-Western Division ended at this area recently cut up. Beyond this not an acre of land could be sold for agricultural purposes without

altering the boundary of the South-Western Division. Yet the Minister, with two years' experience behind him, had told the Committee that he was not satisfied that land could be worked so far east. He had told the Committee that he had held up land which must of necessity be westerly of this block which was on the very extreme of the South-Western Division. Were we to believe the Minister when the Minister said he was not satisfied that the people should be settled in these other districts? Were we to believe that the Minister was sincere when he told us that the late Administration had settled people too far east, seeing that he himself was going on with settlement in that direction? Undoubtedly these people out there deserved the utmost consideration which the Minister could show them. That utmost consideration was to build them railways, construct roads, provide water supplies and to do for them all that the late Administration had undertaken to do when these earlier subdivisions were made, and to do it with as little delay as possible. There was a good deal to be said for some of the settlers who found themselves further away from a railway than they had anticipated. The previous Government had sent out the Advisory Board to mark the map with all the railway lines needed in the South-West. The Advisory Board had marked the map and it had not been proved that they were wrong in a single instance. The board had consisted of Mr. Paterson, the Manager of the Agricultural Bank, Professor Lowrie, Mr. Despeissis, and Mr. John Muir, and undoubtedly it was a highly capable combination. Some of these officers had since been sacked. They were the best possible men for the job. It had been the policy, and still was the policy, to charge the man who had a farm near the railway a little more than was charged to a man whose farm was five or ten miles away. That was perfectly reasonable. Everyone knew that a man in a settled district would willingly pay a pound or two more per acre than would be asked for land more remote from railway communication. That had been the policy followed by the late

Administration, and it was a perfectly reasonable one. He was entirely with the member for Toodyay (Mr. A. N. Piesse) when that hon. member said there must be some reclassification. In the case of lands deprived of the promised railway from Wickepin to Merredin there should be at once some relief provided for the people, who should be told fairly that they would be treated reasonably and that their land would be reduced in value, where the railway line had been taken from them. This line had been promised on the assumption that the Advisory Board's route would be adopted, and the people deprived should receive some special consideration. At this stage he was not speaking generally but was speaking of the man who had been deprived of something he was entitled to have. The Minister, he believed, would acknowledge that he was going on with exactly the policy laid down in his time in regard to values.

The Minister for Lands: Not exactly.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Minister would admit there were cases where land had been increased in value after the returns had left the district office. There were many cases in which the Minister had exercised his undoubted right and faced his undoubted responsibility of doing what he believed was right. No one could blame him for that, but he (Mr. Mitchell) blamed the Minister for saying that he was entirely wrong, in not knowing the blocks or the locality, or the special area, to take it upon himself to set aside the advice of his expert officers, the surveyor and the man who knew the block. Could the Minister outline any other policy, and did he intend to alter the policy set up by his predecessors?

Hon. Frank Wilson: He said he would do it.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Yes, but he had been honest enough to admit by his work though not by his words that that policy was entirely right and fair. The Minister remembered before the election all that he had said about the speculator and the disappointments and about high prices, but he knew now that when he looked for the speculator he found more or less a bogey. The Minister had mentioned a

case in which land was bought and sold, and stated that that land had been taken up in his time. The Minister did not, in any one case, show or assert that he (Mr. Mitchell) knew that a sale had taken place or that he knew anything about any one of the selections, because no Minister knew who was taking up the land. The Minister told hon. members that in every case he had agreed to the transfer, not that he (Mr. Mitchell) had anything to do with the transfer or had any knowledge of the sale, but after having accused him that was the best evidence he could produce. The Minister did what he would probably have done, and probably had done on many occasions. When he found an innocent buyer had paid his money he protected the buyer, and the Minister had not shown that the State had lost a single penny by any of these transactions. The very fact of preventing sales reduced the value of security and the value of security to the selector was the all important factor. During his term of office he had gone into the highways and byways and said, "We will make farmers of you if you have any grit, and will work." He had been attacked for doing that, and had been told that a man should have £300 before going on the land. That was said by a member on the Ministerial side of the House, and was received in silence by the Minister for Lands.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): Professor Lowrie said something similar.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Yes, but Professor Lowrie was not charged with the responsibility of settling this country. The Honorary Minister should know that the country had been settled for 75 years, and that we were still getting our flour from the East, but when the Liberal Administration had been in power for a few years, the State was able to supply its own needs and export some. At the end of 75 years he had taken the Honorary Minister's unemployed and penniless workers and put them on the land, and the result had been that we had loaded our vessels with wheat and carried 280,000 tons of wheat over the railways. This year the Premier said he expected the

State to export eight million bushels of wheat. Not two million of the eight million bushels would be produced by men who went on the land with a capital of £200 or over. The great bulk of it would be produced by men who went on the land with practically no money at all. It was very strange that he should be attacked for having taken these penniless workers of Western Australia in hand and made successful farmers of them. Of course there would be some failures, but the whole country would fail if the Minister demanded that a man should produce £300 before he could become a selector. It would be ridiculous and would be going back to the old order of things. Some writers in the Press had referred to the old Liberal land policy, but that was the policy which the present Administration were largely carrying out. The Minister need not be afraid. If the past year or two had done nothing else, it had shown the value of our broad acres. The other day he had the opportunity of going from Dowerin to Cowcowing, and every crop he saw was good, and these crops were growing on sandplain, on tamma thicket, on mallee country, and on rich salmon gum and gimlet wood land. Everywhere he had gone the crops were good. He believed 75 per cent. of those crops were put in without the aid of a plough. This development of our lighter land was largely the result of the past two or three years' investigations. If he were Minister he would say there was no greater happening in connection with our land settlement than the discovery of the use of these lighter lands, but instead of that the Minister croaked and was not sure that good would come of it. We had heard a good deal about settling people on these dry areas. During the trip referred to he was reminded that Mr. R. B. Leake, the most experienced man in this State so far as our back country was concerned, who had farmed at Kellerberrin for 50 years, had taken up a selection for his son at Kununoppin, which as hon. members knew was beyond Kellerberrin. If Mr. Leake, a capable, level-headed man with 50 years' experience, was satisfied to go to the extreme of land settlement,

surely croakers who walked about the streets of Perth could take heart. Surely they would admit that they were not nearly as competent to express an opinion as that gentleman. On the strength of one bad year and one indifferent year, not only had Ministers condemned this country without inquiry, but the country had been condemned by others who were not in such a good position to judge, and who largely took the word of Ministers for it. The Minister for Lands said the responsibility must follow every ministerial action. With that he entirely agreed. He was willing to take absolutely the full responsibility for every action in connection with land settlement in which the Liberal Government with which he was connected indulged. He took full responsibility for the settlement on the land of those people of whom we had heard so much, for the advances by the Agricultural Bank, and for the building of railways in the outer country. For everything that had happened he would take the full responsibility if hon. members would only give him one-fortieth of the credit which would go to someone, consequent upon the magnificent results which would be achieved. Of those results he had no fear. The Minister was right when he said that the fallow system was spreading and should be applied more generally. That was the wisest of the many remarks the Minister made. Of course there would be lean years and there would also be years of plenty, but the years of plenty would far outnumber the years of smaller crops. The Minister should realise that he had a great responsibility. He occupied a position which meant the control of more acres than any other single man controlled. In this country there were 624 million acres, and the Minister had under his control 600 million acres. What was he going to do with it? Was there to be any activity? Would he restore the life of a year or two ago? Were we to make for prosperity, or sit back and do nothing? The Minister said he had hung up land on the fringe of the Eastern belt and in the Bridgetown district, in one instance apparently because it was too

dry, and in the other presumably because it was too wet.

The Minister for Lands: I did not say in the Bridgetown district.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Yes, the Minister said he had hung up 30,000 acres in that district.

The Minister for Lands: That was probably owing to timber classification.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: What would satisfy the Minister? The Minister had not only this magnificent wheat belt from the Murchison River to the Stirling Range, 600 miles of country, part of which had been sold, but a country awaiting development, and over which the Minister controlled an enormous area of land—probably he had 50 million acres of land which were his to do as he pleased with. He (Mr. Mitchell) did not wish to infer that the whole of it was good, but the land was in the hands of the Minister, and its value had been increased by the cropping of the last year or two. Then the Minister had the magnificent South-West with its vast dairying possibilities. The irrigation schemes which were being applied made for good, but irrigation was not the solution of the dairying problem. When the South-West was cleared, as it could be by the Government traction engines, a system instituted by the late Liberal Administration and continued by the present Minister, the dairying problem would be solved. There was no possibility of growing cows and trees at the one time in the South-West. The rainfall was magnificent, the climate splendid, and the opportunity for dairying without irrigation probably the cheapest in Australia when once the trees were out of the way. The trees could only be got out of the way by Government aid actively applied. It had taken a year or two to induce people to use traction engines, but they were doing so now, and it was for the Government to develop that system and provide traction engines for the settlers at the cheapest possible rate. The Government should give very long terms to people who were improving their property. It might be wise in that district to offer them much longer terms than had

been offered. It was very expensive work and terms could only become light when they were spread over a period of 25 or 30 years. The opportunity was there to settle hundreds of people. The Minister said he was having the timber classified. Having made the classification he intended to go back to cut out the blocks which were suitable for settlement and which did not carry timber. By far the better scheme would be to cut out the blocks and leave the rest of the country with the Crown. The Minister had the timber reserves, but the classification of course was not accurate, and boundaries could not be fixed by the work done in that way. The area was too big. The correct idea, and the idea which he had practised there was to have these portions cut out. It was true that some mistakes had been made. Land carrying timber had been cut up and had had to be reserved from sale, but the very fact that mistakes had been made in the initial stages of the work should be a guarantee that they would not occur in the future. He strongly advised the Minister to spend any money he had on finishing the job and marking the blocks. We knew how much timber there was and we knew that we were not likely to reach the limit for many years. We had heard a good deal about the importation of £1,000 worth of butter a day, but the Minister knew, with the facilities for clearing, that this could be stopped if he would only clear and sell land in the South-Western corner of the State. The Minister dealt with some remarks made by the member for Katanning in regard to poison leases. These lands would be found on the west of the Great Southern line. The Minister had had a classification made and for the most part the classifier refused to reduce the price of the land, or at any rate he reduced it very slightly. He (Mr. Mitchell) believed that the people who took up poison lands might well be given these lands for nothing if they would eradicate the poison from them. One thousand acres should be sold at a nominal price to a selector who could eradicate poison and stock the country. The yearly payments by the selector for the

first 10 years should be very small if we demanded anything at all. He did not desire to deal with Yandanooka because the Minister had yet to settle the question of the mineral rights, but in regard to the Avondale estate we were told that the previous Government had paid for that what was far in excess of its value. The present Minister for Lands had withdrawn this estate from sale.

Hon. Frank Wilson: He did worse than that.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It was withdrawn from sale, and in that way the Minister hoped to prove his words that the State would not sell it. Several would-be buyers had told him (Mr. Mitchell) that they had been refused blocks. Now we found that the Minister was holding up this estate for the purpose of an agricultural farm, and he hoped the Minister would establish a wheat-breeding station on one of the blocks which he was holding up. It was quite right for the Government to have an experimental station, and a wheat-breeding station should be established there, but it was not fair to hold up the whole of the area and do practically nothing with it. The Minister made a profit out of the estate last year, but he should tell the House what he intended to do. We did not want the Minister to say what it was proposed to do in the dim and distant future, but he should say that he would put in a manager at Avondale and establish a State farm there. This land was bought to be sold again. It was true that it had paid its way, but that was not altogether satisfactory. If the Minister was not going to use the land he should let someone else have it. In the future we should not hear so much about the trouble of the settler, but we should hear a little more about the assistance which the Minister had given. The Minister, it was true, had spent £50,000 on seed wheat, and the farmers appreciated that help, but that money had been obtained from loan funds. We had also been told that the Treasury had been depleted because help had been given to farmers, but the money had not come from revenue and

neither had the £40,000 which had been spent on water supplies. The Minister, it was to be hoped, would remember his duty to the country and would as speedily as possible realise the opportunities ahead of us and give expression to the faith which should be in any Minister for Lands. It was no use going about with long faces, and it was no use telling the people that they should not be on the land, and that it was a crime for the previous Administration to have put them there. How many times did we hear it said that many of the people who were on the land had been "settled" on the land by the previous Administration, not "put" on the land. The Minister for Lands should get away from his office and meet the settlers and discuss matters with them, and then come back feeling as cheerful as most of those did who met the farmers. The Minister would soon learn then that the people who were on the land had very little to complain about except perhaps the price of the land, but it was only natural that they should complain about the price which they paid for the land. The troubles of the settlers would disappear, not because of the crops they produced, but because of the unearned increment. The security was good and safe, and investors would leave their money with the farmers. If the security was good, credit would be established and the little troubles which we heard about would disappear. With regard to the Forestry Department he had already found that the question of appointing a conservator was a very difficult one indeed. The member for Toodyay spoke about growing light woods, but if we succeeded in doing that where the cost of clearing was heavy and the cost of labour was great, then we would be pretty smart. It was doubtful whether we could compete with other countries in the production of light woods. He took a hand in the planting of the pines at Lardlow, and that plantation, together with the one at Hamel, were now object lessons, and no doubt they would lead to the private planting of similar trees. But where we had to clear land at a high cost the planting of

such trees in this country would not be a commercial proposition. The Minister would do well to appoint a conservator, a man who would be more of a business manager, who would protect the timber from waste and would see that it was marketed wherever possible. There was no need to worry about the jarrah country because the land would always carry jarrah. What was desired was that we should do the best we could with the timber we had, and we were entitled to make more money out of it. The country should get something more than it was getting to-day by way of royalty. The Premier told us that he was going to increase the farmers' freights and later on consider the advisability of increasing the freights on timber. However, he did not wish the business to be anything but a success commercially, and he did not desire to see the charges unduly high, but when the price of timber was good, as it was at the present time, we should be reaping a better harvest for the State Treasury. The Government had gone into the karri forests and he ventured to say that they would burn their fingers down there. We knew that they were going to cut sleepers for the trans-Australian railway, and it was known also that in order that they might earn £3,750 a year to pay the powellising company they would cut a quantity of karri and it would be powellised whether the system was good or bad. In building their mills in those forests they were running a great risk of making a considerable loss because they would not be able to find a market for their scantlings. This, however, might be obviated if they could use the karri in connection with the manufacture of fruit cases. An expert a few years ago said that Western Australia should send her fruit home packed in her own timbers and it would be the best possible advertisement that the State could have. He was glad that the opportunity had presented itself to enable him to say a word or two in connection with this great department that the Minister for Lands presided over. The Minister should be delighted and he should do as well as was done in the

past, but it was not expected that he could. The Minister had very serious responsibilities to face, and those responsibilities did not begin and end with the man on the land. The Minister's responsibility was to all the people in the State because all were depending more or less upon the development and success of agriculture.

[*Mr. McDowall resumed the Chair.*]

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin): The Minister for Lands was to be congratulated on the administration of his department, and he felt that the settlers which the Government had kept on the land in the face of two adverse seasons were now on the high way of prosperity. As a result of the assistance given to the settlers by the Labour Government we were faced with general prosperity to-day throughout the agricultural districts and the result was shown to-night in the fact that for the first time in two years, the member for Northam had recovered a little of his old time optimism. He was glad to see that the work of the Government was bringing the hon. member back to his former frame of mind. For over two years the whole of the Liberal Party, headed by the member for Northam, had been decrying and defaming the State. They could see no good at all in anything, and by their pessimism they had done more than anybody else to traduce the agricultural industry.

Hon. J. Mitchell: What did we say?

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: If one were permitted to quote from *Hansard*, it could be shown that the hon. member had stated that the actions of the Government had reduced the values of land and diminished confidence in the country. Notwithstanding that attitude, the Government had continued their policy of assistance to the settlers, and had kept the people on the land, and members of the Opposition were beginning to recover from the knockout which they had received two years ago from the electors. He was delighted to think that a little less croaking would be heard from the Opposition benches in future. It was un-

generous on the part of the hon. member for Northam to suggest that any members on the Government side had ever condemned Western Australia, because for the last two years the Government and their supporters had been showing their continued faith in the wheat belt. It was true that the previous Government had promised the settlers in the wheat belt a series of things, particularly in the way of railway communication, but what they had provided the settlers with in the way of necessary railway facilities was very little indeed.

Hon. J. Mitchell: We passed more railways than your Government have done.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: The Liberal Government had put some Bills through, but they had not built many railways. Since the present Government had been in power however, there had been a splendid record of rapid railway construction. Amongst the railways built by the present Government were the Wickepin-Merredin line, which was a good proposition, and followed the best possible route; the Wongan Hills-Mullewa line, which should have been built long ago, and was now rapidly approaching completion through the efforts of the present Government; the Quairading-Bruce Rock line that had been built in record time; the Yillimining-Kondinin line, which was well under construction, and also the Brookton-Kunjin line. Throughout Western Australia could be seen the works of the Labour Government in railway construction, and those settlers who had been fed up with empty promises while the Liberal Administration were in power now saw the railways completed and approaching completion. Right through the wheat belt the people had cause to bless the name of Scaddan. Speaking on the Address-in-Reply, he had shown that over 300,000 additional acres of land had been cropped since the present Government had come into power and more than double as much per year had been spent on railways as had ever been spent by any previous Government. He was perfectly satisfied also that the Govern-

ment received much better value for the money expended, although some of the Liberal contractors were not having as good an innings as they had had before.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You have spent 6½ millions of loan money, and have done nothing.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: The present Government had built railways throughout the wheat belt, and when the people had an opportunity they would show renewed confidence in that Government who had done so much more for them in face of adverse seasons than had ever been done before.

Hon. J. Mitchell: But what about the 6½ millions of borrowed money?

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: The Government had not been afraid to show their confidence in the country, they had spent that money to the best possible advantage, and as a result of their efforts, a little of the hon. member's optimism, which had been lost for the last two years, was coming back. In regard to the price of land, he had received with satisfaction the assurance of the Minister for Lands that since he had been in office, he had not put up the price of land as classified and recommended by his officers. On the other hand since the Labour Government had been in power, they had reduced the calamitous charges imposed by the Liberal Administration. He need only instance the case of Denmark, on which, according to the *Government Gazette*, hundreds of lots had been reduced in price, and settlers had been relieved of the burden which the previous Government had put on them, whilst a new regulation had been brought into force, under which settlers who were dissatisfied with the prices put on their holdings, could have their holdings reclassified on paying the fees involved.

Hon. J. Mitchell: They have always had that right.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: That was not so, and letters could be produced, which had been sent by the department, whilst the hon. member was Minister, refusing to grant any reclassification, but to-day, settlers got a reclassification as a right if

they were prepared to pay the fees. He was glad that the Minister for Agriculture and his colleagues had devoted their energies to supplying the settlers with the water supplies and roads so necessary for their convenience, and that they had held back temporarily land in dry areas until it could be decided where and when railways could be built. In regard to the necessity for a reclassification of land, he candidly agreed that land required reclassification, particularly in localities where it had been expected that railways would be built, and afterwards those railways had been built further away. Such cases existed in connection with the Wickpin-Merredin and Yillimining-Kon-dinin lines, and in all cases where the route had been altered from that originally proposed, he hoped the Government would have a reclassification made and see that no settler in the farming areas was charged more than a fair value for his holding, taking railway facilities and other factors into consideration. He would again urge that the Government should consider the desirability of charging the settler only sixpence per acre per annum for the whole term of his lease, that was to say, where the price of the land exceeded ten shillings per acre the term of the lease should be correspondingly increased. If that were done, land valued at fifteen shillings per acre would be sold on a lease of thirty years, and the settler would only pay twenty-five pounds per 1,000 acres per year, and if the land were higher in value, the same annual rental would be charged. The Minister, with his knowledge of the conditions of settlers in the wheat belt, must realise that in the early stages of their settlement, they were not able to pay a higher rental than £25 per 1,000 acres per annum. Land had been alienated by the previous Government at £1 per acre on 20 years terms, and it was utterly impossible for the settler to pay that price within a term of 20 years.

Mr. Gill: As high as 30s. per acre has been charged.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: If there were such cases then settlers should be given 60 years in which to pay that price. The

Government could well afford to wait for their money. Whether they adopted that suggestion or not, they were not going to get the money, because to-day the settlers were not in a position to pay. He hoped the Government would make a virtue of necessity and see that no settler in the wheat belt was asked to pay for his land at a greater rate than sixpence per acre per annum. It was true that the Government had already moved in that direction, and this Chamber had passed the Land Act Amendment Bill, which would have given every settler his land for the first three years absolutely rent free. Another place, however, had seen fit to reject the Bill, and he only hoped that the Government would re-introduce the measure in its entirety. Reference had been made to poison lands, and again he would remind the Committee that the Land Act Amendment Bill of last session had provided that every selector of poison land should be free to take that land up for the first 10 years rent free. That provision was welcomed throughout the districts west of the Great Southern where the poison was most plentiful and injurious, and he hoped the Government would re-introduce that amendment also at the earliest possible opportunity. A matter he would like to bring before the Minister was the salaries lately offered by advertisement to junior surveyors. Applications had been called for certain positions as junior surveyors, and, contrary to the usual practice, the advertisement did not set out the number of vacancies to be filled, and as far as he knew, no information had been given in the *Government Gazette*, as to any positions being filled. The salary offered was £276 a year, and several surveyors who had spoken to him on the subject had said that as a profession they objected to taking salaried positions at less than £312 per annum, which, he understood, had been the ruling rate in the past. He was informed that no competent men had applied for the positions. He would like to know whether that was so, and also whether it was true that through the positions not being filled the work was being done by contract at a payment of £5 or £6 per day. The surveying profes-

sion was one deserving of consideration at the hands of any Government in this State, and he hoped the Minister would see that the sweating wage of £276 a year was not offered in future appointments and that the Government would try to start its young surveyors at a salary of £312.

The Minister for Lands: There is a vital difference, as a contract surveyor finds his staff.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: There was a great deal of the work of the district offices that could be carried out with advantage by salaried men rather than by contract men. If that was so, why did the Government not advertise for salaried officers? If they wanted the men, and if they thought it was in the interests of the department to employ salaried surveyors, surely they were not going to do without them for the sake of another £26 or £30 a year. He was in close contact with many of the young surveyors and thought this was a matter which the Minister for Lands should set right at the earliest possible moment.

Mr. MONGER (York): The Minister for Lands had given us very little fresh information to-night, in fact there was very little for him to do. The Premier in his Budget Speech dealt so extensively with the matter that there was very little left for the Minister for Lands to explain. When listening to the Budget Speech he (Mr. Monger) was certainly somewhat interested at the glowing accounts of land settlement and the increased quantity of land that was being taken up, according to the statement made by the Premier. It must be fresh in the minds of hon. members that early in October, 1911, certain instructions were issued by the Minister for Lands in regard to his future intentions in the matter of dealing with the agricultural lands of this State. The Minister then said that the lands under conditional purchase were practically to be only granted under residential conditions, that was under Clause 55 of the present regulations, and that no further conditional purchases would be granted under non-residence conditions. Clause 56. In looking through the quantity of land that had

been taken up during the past few months—and he presumed his figures, which would be quoted from the latest *Statistical Abstract*, could be taken as correct—he noticed month after month during this year the quantity of land taken up and approved of by the Minister under grazing lease exceeded the quantity of land taken up and applied for under conditional purchase. In connection with lands taken up under a grazing lease, it was not compulsory to reside there.

The Minister for Lands: There must be residence through an agent.

Mr. MONGER: Yet, in regard to the other matter, the Minister refused to enable a man to have an agent. In every case during the last nine months, or nearly every month, the quantity of land under grazing conditions exceeded that under conditional purchase, clearly showing that the investor preferred a non-residence condition in preference to being compelled to take up a particular block and reside on it. If it was so disastrous and detrimental to the country to allow a man residing in Perth to take up non-residential conditional purchase land, he (Mr. Monger) said it was equally wrong to enable him to take up a non-residential grazing lease. He would like to point out to hon. members the one-sided view taken by the Minister for Lands. There had been a great outcry prior to the last elections that no people should be placed on the lands of this State until railway facilities had been given, until water had been provided, and roads had been cleared, etcetera, but what did we find to-day? We found the Minister going out to Lake Wallambin, in the Mount Marshall district, away from railway facilities, and he (Mr. Monger) ventured to say that no provision had so far been made in regard to water supply or the clearing of roads in that district, and the same remark applied to Mullongully, east of Totadjin. Only a few days ago he called at the Lands Office and asked for lithos. of these two new areas, but could only be supplied with those in connection with Lake Wallambin, but no lithos. of the other were procurable. If

such a thing had taken place during the regime of the hon. member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) there would have been a terrible outcry, not only from the present Minister for Lands, but on the part of all hon. members on that side. There was a notice on the motion paper in regard to a select committee to inquire into the prices charged to settlers for their land, and we were told by the Minister that any matter of reduction would be dealt with on its merits. To-night in introducing his Estimates the Minister made no reference in that connection. Many settlers went and took up land along the Yillimining-Kondinin areas, along the advisory board's route of the Wickepin-Merredin railway, and were charged as high as 27s. 6d. per acre, yet these people to-day found themselves in the position of carting as far as 28 miles to Bruce Rock, before they could get to the nearest point on the Wickepin-Merredin railway line, and yet they had been charged 27s. 6d. per acre. They would have been perfectly satisfied if the advisory board's route had been given effect to, as it was on the distinct understanding that the railway would go on that particular route that they took up this land, and now they found themselves many miles further away than they had expected to be and they were entitled to some reasonable reduction in the price they had been charged. Some of the land on the present route of the railway was the worst agricultural land in the State. The evidence given before the select committee showed that never more than 12s. was charged for land abutting on present route, whereas land eight or ten miles east on the route recommended by the advisory board was charged for as high as 27s. 6d. per acre. In these circumstances, and owing to the fact that the settlers were disappointed and absolutely deceived by the action and attitude of the present Government in altering and deviating from the advisory board's recommendation, some reduction should be granted to them. The hon. member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. E. B. Johnston) had made some reference in which he stated he was of opinion that

a reduction should be made, and it was a pity that the hon. member did not give expression to these views when a member of the select committee appointed by this House to inquire into the question of the route. If in his report the hon. member had made a recommendation in that direction, there might have been some sense in the sympathy he had expressed this evening. He (Mr. Monger) had been struck by the remarks of the Premier the other day at the opening of a railway, when he spoke of the future extension of that particular line to Narrogin because the advisory board had recommended it.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: With very good reason.

Mr. MONGER: It seemed very strange that when it was going to be to the benefit of a Government supporter, right or wrong—he was not going to say the advisory board were wrong—but the Premier said the Government were going to carry out the recommendations of the advisory board. He (Mr. Monger) wanted to know what was the difference between the personnel of the advisory board which recommended the route which suited the Premier's supporter, the hon. member for Williams-Narrogin, and the personnel of the advisory board which recommended the route—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member has no right to impute motives.

Mr. MONGER: What he was doing was not imputing motives, but only asking where was the difference in the personnel of that board which made one recommendation in an opponent's electorate and the personnel of the board which made a recommendation which would suit the member for Williams-Narrogin.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Will suit the State.

Mr. MONGER: We had no mention by the Minister, nor did he think any mention had been made by any member, with reference to a letter which had been issued by the Department of Agriculture and Industries on the 31st July to all the settlers who were in any way indebted to the department for overdue rents. This letter asked the settlers who owed money

to any of the institutions virtually under the control of the Minister for Lands to assign the whole of their crop and stock assets to the Director of Agriculture to be distributed as he might think fit in payment of the liabilities of those who were unfortunate enough to be indebted to any of these Government institutions.

Mr. O'Loghlen: They are cheerfully accepting that protection.

Mr. MONGER: There was one paragraph in this letter which rather struck him as being a threat and which would compel them to fall in with the demands of the Lands Department—

Should you be in a position that you can make an equitable distribution of the proceeds without the assistance of the Commissioner, it is advisable that you do so, but unless approval of the manner in which you propose to disburse the proceeds is obtained from the Seed Wheat Board before disbursement is made, you will be required to pay in full all your Government accounts.

The Government in appointing the Seed Wheat Commissioner to the position of assignee of these various estates were taking upon themselves an unnecessary responsibility. That was one of the most severe documents that had ever emanated from a public office, demanding in the way it did demand the liquid assets of those who were in any way indebted to the Government. If he were to read some of the clauses in the deed of assignment they would call for rather harsh remarks against the person who prepared the document. He would read one—

For the purpose of this assignment and of cutting, harvesting, and taking away the said crops, the assignor grants to the assignee full and free license and authority to enter upon the assignor's said farm, servants, horses, and wagons, at all times during the continuance of these presents until the said crops are removed.

That appeared tantamount to declaring a man insolvent; in fact he was afraid in many cases the insolvency court would be sought by a number sooner than give to the Seed Wheat Commissioner the powers asked for in this deed of assignment.

He was sorry that there was any necessity for such a document to be sent out to those who had gone through rather a severe time during the past couple of years, and now with every prospect of a good season he felt confident that the farmers would be better able to find a market, arrange where necessary with their creditors, even in a more satisfactory and less less expensive way than that suggested.

Mr. Taylor: Does that document protect the farmer against the chartered banks?

Mr. MONGER: There was no chartered bank which dealt with any farmer who at the same time was indebted to the Agricultural Bank. If he was dealing with an associated bank he was under no obligation to the Government in any way. Even those who were a good bit behind with the associated banks must of necessity pay up overdue land rents, etcetera, in order to keep their security good and intact, unless exemption be given for the time being.

The Minister for Lands: They are exactly on the same plane as the others.

Mr. MONGER: Sooner than allow the department to come down upon the person who was indebted to one of the associated banks, that institution would have to pay off the Government. There was one other matter he desired to refer to. He noticed in a recent issue of the *Sunday Times* that the Press were now refused any information by the department. He could hardly understand the reason for issuing such instructions. So far as the information which was conveyed through the columns of the *Sunday Times* was concerned, it was most useful to the settlers and in many cases useful to others in the locality. He could hardly understand the reason why the Minister refused to give this information to the Press. There was nothing for the department to be afraid of. Any one could get information by paying a small fee, therefore what had the Minister to hide when he refused to the Press the right to obtain any information in connection with the working of the department. It was an embargo which should

be at once removed. He would like to know from the Minister whether he had any fair or reasonable grounds for refusing this information and, if so, what they were.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. T. H. Bath, in reply) : In replying to some of the remarks which had been made by hon. members in the general discussion, dealing first with those of the member for Forrest, he wished to say that since he had been in control of the Lands Department the interests of the woods and forests branch had not been subordinated to those of the Lands Department. As a matter of fact, the Acting Inspector General, with the officers under him, had explicit instructions that the land carrying marketable timber should be reserved and should not be made available for settlement. In these particular areas jarrah was of greater value, and even where the first crop of timber had been cut away and a new crop was coming on, the instructions were that the land should not be made available for settlement. It was also well known that where the best jarrah forests occurred the land was not likely to be very productive from the point of view of settlement, and certainly it was not going to carry a tithe of the value, if disposed of for agricultural purposes, that it would as a timber proposition. It was true that some applicants considered themselves aggrieved when they could not get a particular area of country, and the fact that forestry reports had to be obtained on these areas when reserved was often a source of complaint that delay had been occasioned, and he had pointed out to the under-secretary that it was much better at the outset to give these people clearly to understand that the areas were not available for settlement. In regard to some remarks made by the member for Murray-Wellington, it might be pointed out that since he assumed office the staff of inspectors had been increased, and not only that but their emoluments had been increased, and they were obtaining to-day payment in the way of salary and allowances, which was provided for in the reclassification proposals. In regard

to the position of Karridale, the remarks of the hon. member were as much an indictment against the previous Government as they were against the present Government, because the former Government had the opportunity of permitting applications for the country, and when the hon. member stated that there was unfair discrimination, that statement was answered by his own further assertion that we were proposing to take over the railway already constructed. That line had been taken over because ultimately it would be part of the railway from Busselton south and the fact that that had been taken over in the interests of the settlers there, who although were few in number, at the present time, feared that the railway was going to be pulled up and that they were going to be isolated was the best answer to the statement that the present Government took this action because of some prejudice they had against those people. There had been opposition in regard to the exploitation of this karri country and it was thought better to conserve the interests of the State in view of the fact that the Government were erecting mills and spending a considerable sum of money there. The member for Toodyay referred to the fact that the question of the payment of rent instalments should not be regarded from a revenue standpoint. It might be asked why? In the previous history of the State it did not matter how isolated settlers were, or whether they were getting along badly or not, they had to find their rents, and the action of the present Government was entirely a new departure. If we were now asked to make a new departure and say that the revenue was to stand aside, it might be asked why the same argument had not been urged against previous Governments. The Government had just as much right to consider the revenue standpoint as had previous Administrations. That they should be challenged at this stage, particularly when the return from railways constructed in that area and from water supply were practically *non est*, was altogether above his comprehension.

Mr. A. N. Piesse: Because the necessity did not arise.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Undoubtedly it had arisen. Individual settlers had had struggles all through the history of land settlement in the State. Indeed it was more true in the earlier period than in subsequent periods, and yet those settlers had always been called upon to pay up the rents. In regard to the Agricultural Bank, the trustees had acted in accordance with the responsibility placed upon them. He was not going to interfere with that responsibility. It was the duty of the Government to lay out the general policy, but it would be altogether opposed to good administration if he was to continually interfere and say in cases where the bank considered the loan was not justified that the loan must be advanced. It would set all administrative work at defiance. As a matter of fact it would mean, in the case of the bank itself, a disastrous proposition from the financial point of view. With all the capital that had been distributed through the bank, the accumulated amount of profit in reserve amounted to only £40,000. That was the only resource, other than the general revenue of the State, which the bank possessed against any loss which might be sustained. If the trustees of the bank considered it inadvisable to lend in any particular locality for the present, he, as Minister, was not going to interfere. The member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) in his criticism had adopted his usual attitude. The hon. member seemed to be entirely incapable of first getting hold of the facts and then building up his criticism upon them. One had to complain, as on previous occasions, that the hon. member's criticism was a rigmarole of inaccuracies, and that the hon. member did not take the trouble to acquaint himself with the facts before launching out in a tirade against the Lands Department. That attitude on the part of the hon. member divested his criticism of any value whatever.

Hon. Frank Wilson: I do not think you are accurate in making that statement.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: On previous occasions he had repeatedly pointed out innumerable specific instances of absolute inaccuracies and departures from the truth in regard to statements made by the member for Northam.

Mr. George: You are not justified in saying that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: One instance which occurred to him had arisen in the discussion of the Estimates last session, when the member for Northam had stated that potatoes were then £30 a ton in Perth. As a matter of fact the price at that time was £9 a ton.

Hon. J. Mitchell: We have only your word for that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In following the hon. member on that occasion he had pointed out that the statement was inaccurate, and had quoted the prices given in the daily Press.

Hon. J. Mitchell: They made it £30 one day and £9 the next.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The price had not been £30 a ton since the hon. member left office.

Mr. A. N. Piesse: I have got £24 a ton myself.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Then the member for Northam had tried to turn the tables, and had excused his own croaking in the past by inferring that he (the Minister for Lands) had been croaking; and the hon. member asked that he (the Minister for Lands) should go through the country and see the settlers for himself. He had been through the country more than had the member for Northam.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Oh, ring off.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The member for Northam gravitated to his own farm at Northam, but he (the Minister for Lands) had been more often through the districts where settlers were affected by adverse circumstances than had the member for Northam. The attitude taken up by the Government was, not to waive an airy hand and advise the settler to get a cultivator and go out and achieve success. The member for Northam had seen to it that the preliminary work on his own holding was done by others.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Absolutely wrong.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member's knowledge of what could be accomplished by a cultivator had been disproved by the bitter experience of many of those who had followed that hon. member's advice. Instead of merely saying that it would be all right, the Government had tried to help the settlers. If hon. members would look at the map they would see what had been done by the Government by way of the provision of water supply. Instead of, like the hon. member, talking about building railways, the Government had built them, and had built roads and given the settlers assistance in regard to postponement of payment of rents, and in other respects. Instead of merely talking platitudes the Government had sought by deeds and not by words to render the settlers all the assistance possible, and it came ill from the hon. member to talk as he had done about what he had accomplished in the past. There was no pessimism in the attitude he (the Minister for Lands) had taken up, namely, that the problems surrounding land settlement were to be approached soberly. It was necessary that all the intelligence, not only of farmers themselves, but of those appointed to assist them, should be brought to bear upon the solution of this problem. The question of the best means of cultivation, the question of whether improvements could be made in traction power, the question of decreasing the cost of production—all these questions entered into the problems of whether or not farming could be continued successfully.

Hon. J. Mitchell: That is pretty tall.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: On many of these holdings was the effect to be seen of the lack of capital which had hampered the efforts of many of those who had gone on the land. The statement that the struggle was a difficult one and one under which many settlers without capital had succumbed, was borne out not only by such experts as Professor Lowrie, but also by the experience of settlers in similar areas in the Eastern States. He had a statement made by a practical farmer who had settled in the Pinnaroo district, and who had given his

experience at what was known as the Dry Farming Conference held in Adelaide a few years back, a conference at which Mr. Sutton, the Commissioner for the Wheat Belt, had been present. Mr. A. J. A. Koch, speaking of his experience in the Pinnaroo district, which had an average rainfall of from 14 to 16 inches, had said—

The amount of capital required depends a good deal upon the man. I have known instances where people have come out with very little spare cash, perhaps £100, a wagon, and three or four horses, and have gradually worked their way up until to-day they have grown enough wheat to put up substantial improvements on their farms, which are gradually becoming fully established. Under general circumstances, however, I consider that a man taking up 800 to 1,000 acres of this scrub land requires in cash or assets, such as stock and implements, £400 to £500. With this amount he should do well, but every £100 extra means so much less hard work in establishing himself.

If we could guarantee a long succession of good seasons, with good returns, then it was possible for a man of energy with a small amount of capital to succeed, but if at the outset he happened to strike a year in which the return was nil, and an increase of expenditure in the provision of water and the supplying of his other requirements, and then in the following year struck an indifferent season, such a man would find that his lack of capital was likely to lead to failure. It was better to be candid and honest and give some reasonable idea of the difficulties settlers had to encounter, than to mislead them and have to face their dissatisfaction when they found that the conditions were not as they had been held up to be. It was not pessimism, it was merely a wise provision which should characterise the attitude of anyone with the responsibility of administering a department such as he had to control at the present time. Again, the hon. member had stated that he would have done the same as he (the Minister for Lands), and instead of penalising the innocent purchaser he would

have put the transfer through. The ground for criticism which he (the Minister for Lands) had against the hon. member was that while the hon. member did that, or would have done it, he did not deal with the evil which had occasioned the necessity for action. That was the only difference between the hon. member and himself.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Neither did you.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: As to knowing nothing about it; it was not easy to understand how the hon. member had no knowledge of it. Every man in the City had known of it. Those in the country had known of it. Those who had to purchase through agents areas which they should have got from the land board, had known about it, and if the hon. member the then Minister had had no knowledge of it then his eyes and ears and mind must have been closed to all perception. He (the Minister for Lands) could quote a hundred dozen of such cases as he had quoted the other night, cases which had cropped up continually. More than 50 per cent. of the selection which had gone on at that time under Section 56 was of a speculative character. In regard to the point raised by the member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. E. B. Johnston), namely, the appointment of surveyors, the salary advertised was the salary fixed by the Public Service Commissioner. Although it was true that at the outset the commissioner did not get the applications for the number of vacancies advertised, and of course pending the appointment it was necessary to have some of the work done by contract surveyors, yet the fact remained that the Public Service Commissioner had said that the classification was a fair one, particularly when the salary was considered in relation to that paid to the inspecting surveyors recently appointed, and who would have been in a disadvantageous position if the positions had been advertised at a higher rate of salary. Those positions could be filled at the classification which the commissioner had accepted.

Hon. J. Mitchell: It was a scandalous wage.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: It was a sweating wage.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The member for York had taken up the question of what he had called the different attitude adopted in regard to grazing leases, as against selection under non-residential conditions. The position in regard to Section 56 was that the selector did not even have to place an agent on the holding. As a matter of fact he could hold the land for two years without doing a tap, and for two years it was impossible for the department to question him in regard to the fulfilment of conditions on the holding. Under a grazing lease it was true a test inspection could not be made until the end of two years, because the leaseholder was given two years in which to effect certain improvements. But the Act also specified that he must fulfil the residence conditions by agent, and that differentiated it from Section 56 because the selector of a grazing lease was not going to put an agent on his holding unless that agent did something for the money he was paid.

Hon. J. Mitchell: He is penalised in the matter of improvements under Section 56.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But the fact remained that the penalty did not have any force until two years had elapsed. The selector had two years in which to play with the holding, whereas under Section 56, or in connection with a homestead farm, the selector had to make good within six months, and that was a reasonable time to give a man when first he took up a holding under residence conditions. Of course it had been found necessary to relax even that condition, but it was there to be enforced if there was any doubt as to the bona fides of a settler. The department could always give an extension where the circumstances justified it, and where difficulties had occurred in regard to water, for instance, the department had extended the time for many of the selectors under residence conditions. The member for York had also referred to the circular which had been issued to the farmers who were indebted not only to the Government de-

partments, but to other creditors outside departments. That attitude had been taken up owing to the possibility of one creditor acting entirely on his own, and, although the other creditors were willing to give time and consideration to the settler, practically setting that consideration at naught by closing down on the settler and selling him up. The position was that the creditors could not trust one another in the direction of agreeing to the appointment of one of the private trustees, and it was as a result of a conference between the members of the seed-wheat board and the Chamber of Commerce, that the representatives of the chamber had expressed their willingness to accept a Government officer as trustee. The Government were not anxious to embark on the proposal, or to involve themselves in the work entailed. The action had been taken purely in the interests of the settler, and that provision had been made in order to protect the settler acceding to it against one individual creditor who might play a lone hand and say, "I do not care what the other creditors or the Government departments do; I am going to have my pound of flesh, and if he does not pay up I am going to sell him out." That action on the part of one creditor would lead to a rush of all creditors to divide the spoils. This arrangement meant a lot of work to Mr. Sutton and other officers of his department, but it had been made purely in the interests of the settlers. The department had no desire whatever to act harshly, and that was evidenced by the fact that a large number had made the assignment asked for in the circular.

Hon. J. Mitchell: What are you going to do with the Avondale estate?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The statement made by the hon. member was incorrect. Except for an area around the main buildings the balance of the Avondale estate was available for settlement.

Mr. Broun: Only 1,463 acres is available.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: How much was reserved?

Mr. Broun: Three thousand three hundred and ninety-three acres.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Anyhow, the position was that at the present time land was available for settlement in the Avondale estate. The gentleman referred to by the member for Northam as having approached the department and applied for land at Avondale had required large areas. Before they put in their application they had approached him and said if they were to get any land at all at Avondale they wanted a very big area, and he had told them that Avondale had been repurchased for closer settlement and they could not secure the large area they desired. The applicants referred to had replied that if they could not get the large area they wanted they would not take any of the estate.

Mr. Broun: That man wanted 3,000 acres for two sons.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It was impossible to say from memory what area was asked for, but he was sure that at the time he considered the area altogether too large on an estate which had been repurchased and cut up for closer settlement. If areas were repurchased for closer settlement, the Government intended to see that closer settlement resulted. They did not want the same position to arise as on the Narratarra estate, or to have repeated on other repurchased properties what was taking place on the Bowes estate.

This concluded the general debate on the Lands Estimates; votes and items were discussed as follows:—

Vote—*Land Salaries*, £49,232:

Item—Senior assistant to Under Secretary, £480:

Mr. UNDERWOOD: This gentleman, Mr. Morris, was perhaps one of the ablest officers in the Government service, and when it was remembered that ordinary *Hansard* reporters were being paid about £400 and the Chief *Hansard* Reporter about £500, it seemed that this officer should be paid more than £480 per annum. Mr. Morris was capable of more than mere mechanical reporting of speeches. He had no wish to make any invidious distinctions between any of the three under-secretaries; they were all able

men and perhaps all should be paid higher salaries, but Mr. Morris was entitled to considerably more money than he was getting and he trusted that at the first opportunity the Minister for Lands got of raising the salaries, he would bear that officer in mind.

Mr. PRICE: The salary was ridiculous for the work carried out by Mr. Morris. During the last three years that gentleman had been to all intents and purposes carrying out the work of the Under-Secretary, and to have an officer of his ability and responsibility receiving only £480, whilst the Under-Secretary, who, be it said with all due respect was merely a figure-head, was receiving £700 per year, was altogether unjust. Some alteration should be made to give to the man doing the work a reasonable salary. He hoped that the Government would in the near future recognise the justice that was due to Mr. Morris.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The appreciative remarks made in reference to the work performed by Mr. Morris could be cordially endorsed, but appreciation of Mr. Morris could be expressed without any depreciation of the present Under-Secretary for Lands. In Mr. Clifton he had found a loyal servant and a man whose long experience, particularly in regard to the intricacies of the Land Act, was of immeasurable value to any Minister controlling the department. So far as Mr. Morris was concerned no Under-Secretary could wish for an abler and a more self-sacrificing lieutenant. At the time when the Under-Secretary was absent from his office on account of facial paralysis, his chief assistant had proved himself an officer whose value could not be appraised too highly. He could not inform the Committee what the intention of the Government was in regard to that officer, but whenever the Colonial Treasurer stated that Ministers could go through their Estimates and grant increases within the classification laid down he would be glad to consider Mr. Morris and others in the department who had rendered loyal and valuable service.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Excellent work was done by Mr. Morris and those serving under him. There were no officers in the Government service who worked harder and more intelligently than the Lands Department officers, including Mr. Morris.

Mr. Price: I do not say all of them.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: There should be a fairly general increase throughout the departments, and he was sorry that the Minister had not done anything to increase the salaries of those officers.

The Minister for Lands: I stated that when the Colonial Treasurer says that Ministers can deal with increases to officers in their departments, I will do so.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: When something happened that could not happen, the Minister would do something. That was not very comforting to Mr. Morris. If the Minister believed that Mr. Morris should have a little more salary he should say so and fight for the increase. He hoped that in the near future Mr. Morris would achieve better things as regarded salary.

Mr. PRICE: Mr. Morris was to-day receiving the maximum which he was allowed. Therefore, even if the Minister desired, he could not increase that officer's salary.

Mr. George: What do you suggest?

Mr. PRICE: In view of the fact that officers far younger and perhaps far more competent physically to carry out their duties than the Under-Secretary for Lands had been retired, it should be considered whether some effort should not be made to bring about an alteration.

Hon. J. Mitchell: It cannot be done on this item.

Mr. PRICE: Nothing could be done unless the present Under-Secretary was retired. If that officer was not fully competent to carry out his duties owing to physical infirmities—

Hon. J. Mitchell: He is.

Mr. PRICE: That was a matter of opinion, and his opinion did not bear out the assertion that the Under-Secretary was physically fit to carry out his duties. It would be as well if the Government considered the matter of retiring the present Under-Secretary who physically was

not capable of carrying out the duties of his office.

Mr. GEORGE: Knowing the Under-Secretary and Mr. Morris, his opinion was that Mr. Morris would be the last man to desire to receive advancement as the result of kicking out the Under-Secretary.

Mr. Price: It is not a matter of kicking him out.

Mr. GEORGE: That was the position.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The illness of Mr. Clifton was not of a serious character and he had recovered and was doing his work.

Mr. Price: I was not aware of that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Personally he was glad that Mr. Clifton had recovered. Apart from the fact that it would not be very grateful to retire a good servant because he had been sick, the fact remained that Mr. Clifton was still on the right side of 60, and while, naturally, Mr. Morris looked for advancement he did not think that officer desired it at the expense of his present chief.

Mr. PRICE: The impression was in his mind that Mr. Clifton was not expected to be in a condition physically to again carry out his duties. He was pleased to know that the Under Secretary had thoroughly recovered and was carrying out his duties.

Item, Extra clerical assistance, overtime, messengers, caretakers, cleaners, special allowances, temporary draftsman, etcetera, including provision for payment to temporary officers who may be appointed to permanent positions, and who when appointed will be paid from this vote if provision is not made elsewhere, £3,500:

Hon. J. MITCHELL: What were temporary officers in the department being paid? Were they being paid the Arbitration Court award rates?

The Minister for Lands: Yes.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Was 12s. 6d. a day being paid to all temporary officers employed?

The Minister for Lands: We have to pay it.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Government had managed to wriggle out of it discreditably to themselves and to the

country. The item was peculiarly worded in the Estimates.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That wording was adopted because under the previous system the item had to be excessed and the position now was that whether these officers were permanent or temporary, they could be paid from this particular item. Previously one item was under-drawn and another was excessed. The Government's attitude was to fill the permanent positions and the result was a reduction in this item.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It was to be hoped this did not mean that when temporary officers were appointed to the permanent staff at a lower rate than the Arbitration Court award for temporary officers they would lose something as a result of the salary dating back. He understood that had happened in some cases.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It had been done in a number of cases simply because officers were told that they would receive an appointment from a certain date. In the meantime the preliminaries necessary for their appointment to the permanent staff had to be gone through, and in some cases an examination was necessary. In no case, however, was it done except with the agreement of the person to be appointed. Where an officer was on temporary work he was paid in accordance with the Arbitration Court award, and when he was appointed to a permanent position he was paid according to the classification.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Then the Arbitration Court award was paid.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Absolutely.

Item, Clerks: 1 at £264; 1 at £228; 1 at £204; 1 at £180; 1 at £168; 1 at £144 (8 months), £156 (4 months); 1 at £132 (6 months), £144 (6 months); 1 at £120 (10 months), £132 (2 months); 1 at £96 (6 months), £108 (6 months); 1 at £96 (4 months), £108 (8 months); 1 at £96 (1 month), £108 (11 months), £1,765:

Mr. GEORGE: The Minister should explain the meaning of the periods in parenthesis, which in different parts of

this division ranged from one month to 10 months. Were the men referred to at present in the employment of the Government? If so, it seemed that a wholesale system of retrenchment was going on, and in the event of that being so, how did the Minister reconcile it with the statement of the Premier that in no circumstances would there be a reduction of officers?

The Minister for Lands: How do you make out that there is retrenchment?

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Those periods represent increases of salary.

Mr. GEORGE: How could that be so if a man was employed at a salary say, of £144?

The Minister for Lands: You will see that there are two periods.

Mr. GEORGE: Then the explanation was that these were increases admirably disguised. Members had been told that the finances of the State did not admit of increases to civil servants.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: These are civil servants receiving under £200 and entitled to increments.

Mr. GEORGE: It would be more satisfactory to have that statement authoritatively from the Minister.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If the hon. member would look at the marginal note he would see that there was no retrenchment in the matter. For the year 1912-13 the number was ten and for 1913-14 the number was eleven, which represented one additional permanent officer. The salaries represented two items covering the one officer. They represented the payment of one rate of salary for a portion of the year and an increased rate for a further portion of the year. They represented the regulation increases for officers under Classes "F" and "G."

Mr. GEORGE: The matter was clearer now after the Minister's explanation, but it seemed peculiar. Was he to understand that these were automatic increases?

The Minister for Lands: Yes.

Mr. GEORGE: Then he was very pleased to see the Lands Department had adopted the system he inaugurated

in the Railway Department in connection with the salaries of young officers.

Item, Correspondence—Clerks: 1 at £264; 1 at £252; 1 at £240; 4 at £204; 1 at £192; 1 at £180; 1 at £168; 2 at £144; 1 at £144 (8 months), £156 4 months; 1 at £120 (9 months), £132 (3 months); 1 at £120:

Mr. A. N. PIESSE: While on the question of correspondence clerks he wished to bear testimony to the good work done by Mr. Byrne as clerk to the Seed Wheat Board. That gentleman had done excellent work and the success of the operations carried on by that board was largely due to the clerical assistance given by him. He (Mr. Piesse) had seen a good deal of Mr. Byrne's work and appreciated it, and he expressed the sentiments of those with whom this officer had had business when he said they were grateful to him for the fair and expeditious manner in which he had attended to the work of the board.

The Minister for Lands: That officer is on the Agricultural Department Estimates.

Item, Surveyors; 3 at £336; 3 at £276:

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Did the Minister think £276 a fair starting salary? It seemed to him altogether inadequate for a professional man, and whoever fixed this salary had very little regard for the life a surveyor had to lead, as he spent much of his time away from civilisation living in a tent and under the greatest possible discomfort. This salary of £276 was not what would be paid to a decent clerk, yet these surveyors not only had to pay considerable fees before they could become licensed but had to serve a number of years, and it seemed to him that for a junior man who was just through, this salary was too small, particularly as in a little time surveyors would not be allowed to take contract work. The Minister for Lands must know that many surveyors had suffered in health on account of the hardships they had to undergo in the course of their work.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: In endorsing the remarks made by the hon. member

for Northam he would like to say that within the last couple of years the State had lost the services of a lot of the best of our young surveyors, on account of the very low salary that was being offered. Young men whom we could not afford to lose had gone to the Malay States, South Africa, and elsewhere, simply because, as professional men, they would not take the positions offered them at £276. The opinion had been expressed by surveyors that this was a deliberate attempt to sweat the profession, and it was time the Public Service Commissioner's wings were clipped if he was going to drive these young men out of the State in this manner. It was to be hoped that the Government would see that Mr. Jull offered a fair rate of remuneration to these surveyors in future.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: It was all very well for the hon. member to talk about clipping the Public Service Commissioner's wings, but hon. members knew that the Government and the taxpayers had to foot the bill for reclassification which meant a considerable increase in the amount paid to civil servants in this State, and if we were only going to recognise the reclassification when it provided for an increase, and when objection was taken to that reclassification because it did not provide as much as people asked for, we might just as well wipe out the Public Service Act altogether. If we had to honour the classifications, then we would have to take them altogether or not at all. In this connection the Public Service Commissioner declared the salary to be a fair one to start with, and it did not necessarily mean that the surveyors were on that limit the whole time they were employed. If they made good they would have the same chance as other surveyors in regard to increases.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Minister had changed his method in regard to surveys and he wanted these surveyors to do practically the whole of the work. The classification was made, and the Minister accepted it. The point was that if the classification of the Com-

missioner was not in accordance with the Minister's views in regard to the salaries, the Minister should take the responsibility of objecting. He knew the work of these officers as well as the Commissioner, and in most cases could assess their value as well as anyone in the State. It was surprising to find the Public Service Commissioner asking any professional man to work for such a small remuneration.

Mr. Turvey: What did they get in your day?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: During the Surveyor General's absence on one occasion he remembered putting on a young man at £6 a week.

The Minister for Lands: That did not carry the allowance that the present salaries carry.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (Honorary Minister): The person to whom reference had been made was a new arrival, who came out from England. He was a surveyor in Glasgow and he (Hon. W. C. Angwin) knew this man's people. He sent him to the Lands office, where he was started at 9s. a day, but he left there and went on a station. The man's name was Westley.

Hon. J. Mitchell: He was not a licensed surveyor.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (Honorary Minister): He was a surveyor's draftsman and he started under the hon. member.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: He could not be a surveyor in this country unless he was licensed, and English surveyors were not licensed here. The man was certainly not employed as a surveyor at 9s. a day.

Item, Albany District Surveyor, £504:

Mr. PRICE: The attention of the Minister for Lands might be drawn to an anomaly which existed here. There were a number of district land and survey officers, and it was a peculiar thing to find that the district surveyor at Albany, although his classification was exactly the same as that of other surveyors, was placed on the minimum of £504, whereas the others received £528. He was convinced that this could not be owing to anything in the

nature of a suggestion that the officer was not the equal of the district surveyors in charge of other offices in the State.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In this case he thought the appointment when first made was on the minimum, which was on the lower scale than afterwards obtained, and this officer only lately received the permanent appointment.

Mr. PRICE: Although the officer had only been appointed lately he had been in charge since the office was opened. The Minister would agree that the anomaly to which he had referred should not continue. The difference between his salary and that of other surveyors was only £24 per annum, but why the Albany officer should be selected for the minimum salary he was at a loss to understand. The Minister's attention having been drawn to the matter, he should endeavour to rectify it by placing all district surveyors on the same footing.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There was a minimum and a maximum, and these officers had to work under the classification, and when they started they had to start at the minimum salary.

Mr. PRICE: The other officers however, started at £528, and it was because of that that he was drawing special attention to the minimum salary which the Albany officer was drawing.

Item, Avondale Estate—Purchase working plant, etcetera, expenses cultivating, wages, etcetera, £2,000:

Mr. PRICE: In each of the district land and survey offices there was a draftsman in charge. In each case this officer was paid a salary of £276 per annum. That was the absolute minimum fixed by the reclassification carried out some time ago. In view of the Minister's remarks he hoped it was the intention of the Government to improve the salary of these men, who had very serious responsibilities. Frequently the district surveyor was away from the office, during which time the draftsman was the man in charge. Possibly this condition of affairs obtained for two-thirds of the time.

Hon. J. Mitchell: They are all capable men, too.

Mr. PRICE: Undoubtedly. All these men were on the absolute minimum, their classification being from £276 to £336. It was significant that these men were all on the minimum, that the worst possible under the law had been done for them. The next man to them, who was not responsible in any sense, received £252.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If hon. members were to add to their remarks regarding the necessity for increases some information as to where the increases were to come from, hon. members would at least be showing consistency. There was no hope of these officers getting an increase until the financial position was improved.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: Like others he could endorse the remarks made by Mr. Price, so far, at least, as concerned the officers in the district office at Narrogin. The Public Service Commission which visited that district had recommended the Government to grant a district allowance to the officers on the Great Southern on account of the excessive cost of living which prevailed down there. He hoped the Government would take that into consideration and see if they could not extend to those officers the privilege of a railway ticket to Perth once a year, as was given to officers working in outback districts.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): We will give them the whole Treasury and be done with it.

Hon. J. Mitchell: They would still have nothing.

Item, Clerks (Narrogin), £620:

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: The salary paid to the clerk in charge of the district at Narrogin was £204, while the clerk in charge at district offices above Wagin and Beverley received £252.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Narrogin is a district surveyor's office.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: And because of that the work was very much heavier, the district surveyor being so much away. During his chief's absence this clerk had to issue instructions to the clerks

in the other offices. There was a greater responsibility, and more money was received in the office than in any of the other offices. This clerk was the most underpaid man of whom he (Mr. Johnston) knew in the public service.

Item, Clerks (Beverley), £620 :

Mr. A. N. PIESSE : Both Beverley and Wagin had land clerks. A similar convenience should be extended to other townships. The land agency at Toodyay had been closed up, and all that was now provided was a temporary officer once a month. There had been no justification whatever for the closing of that office. It was not fair to make fish of one and fowl of another. There was quite sufficient business in Toodyay to justify the reopening of the Lands office, which had only cost £40 a year. He hoped the Minister would see the justification for reopening those offices in the country. If the Government wished to assure the advancement of the country, it was absolutely essential that the settlers should have every convenience for the transaction of their business.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS : Action had been taken to close the office on the recommendation of the district surveyor, who considered that the inconvenience would not be so great as had been represented, and that the business could be transacted, not necessarily by the people going to Northam, because it would be possible to transmit claims by post. Provision was still made for some officer to attend during rent time in order to give facilities for payments to the department.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Woods and Forests*, £12,689 :

Item, Conservator of Forests (6 months), £375 :

Hon. J. MITCHELL : Was it intended to appoint a conservator of forests? A salary of £375 for six months was again provided on the Estimates.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS : This provision had been made because he had made representations to the Public Service Commissioner that he would like

to have an opportunity of discussing the matter with him. Owing to pressure of business on the part of both that opportunity had not presented itself, but the salary had been put on the Estimates for six months, and it was hoped that an appointment would be made.

Hon. J. MITCHELL : In his opinion the conservator of forests would require to be a business man, who could deal with our grown timber. He hoped the Minister would take the opportunity before the House adjourned of explaining his intentions and ideas regarding this important appointment.

Item, Nurseryman, Hamel, £252 :

Hon. J. MITCHELL : Did this item represent the salary of the manager at Hamel?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS : This was the salary of the officer in charge of the nursery at Hamel. He attended to the growing of trees for the plantation at Ludlow and also the trees issued to the public.

Hon. J. MITCHELL : This gentleman was an excellent officer, and since he was responsible for the big plantation at Ludlow, in addition to the work at Hamel, he was underpaid.

The Minister for Lands : He is not responsible at Ludlow; he grows the trees at Hamel and they are sent to Ludlow.

Hon. J. MITCHELL : It would be difficult to replace this officer, and if it was desired to reproduce softwoods there would be no need to get the conservator to do it, because Mr. McFarlane was competent to do the work economically and well. The fact of having such an officer in the department would leave the conservator free to deal with the native forests.

Vote put and passed.

Progress reported.

BILL—FREMANTLE IMPROVEMENT.

Returned from the Legislative Council with requested amendments.

House adjourned at 11.19 p.m.