

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 17th August, 1937.

Address-in-reply, fourth day PAGE 83

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fourth Day.

Debate resumed from the 11th August.

HON. C. H. WITTENOOM (South-East) [4.35]: I listened very carefully to the Lieut.-Governor's Speech at the opening of Parliament. I have only a few remarks to make on the motion before the Chair, and I intend to confine them to the subject matter of the Speech as far as I can. Quite a number of Bills were mentioned and, judging from the short titles, most of them will be welcomed and, so far as I can see, will not require any great amount of explanation. A number of industrial measures are included, and although one or two speakers have indicated that those Bills might receive rough handling in this House, I for my part am prepared to assure the two representatives of the Government of my support provided those Bills are not likely to cause any harm to the State or operate against its best interests. On the other hand, I must refer to Clauses 11 and, I think, 33 of the tender forms for Government contracts that have recently been sent out. Any opposition that I can offer to Bills adopting this form will be given. I cannot understand how a Labour Government, with a reputation for being level-headed, could possibly introduce such contract forms. If a provision of that kind appears in any of the industrial measures to be introduced by the Government, it will receive my strongest opposition. I consider that the inclusion of such a provision in the tender forms to be a most retrograde step that will do tremendous harm to the State and prevent the inflow of capital from other countries.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Have you not got it in regard to the Albany Woollen Mills?

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: I am not referring to any particular industry. I have seen the tender forms, and I consider the provision is wrong.

Hon. J. Cornell: It is not only wrong; it is immoral.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Hear, hear!

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: In the early part of the Speech reference is made to the deficit, which is attributed partly to the drought and partly to the unexpected reduction of the Federal grant by £300,000. The drought is one of the worst ever experienced in this State. I believe that in 1891 a severe drought occurred in parts of the State, probably even worse than the present one, but this drought has extended from the north to the south. I question whether the oldest member in the House can recall a time when sheep stations have been completely denuded of stock as have some of the stations in the Murchison district this year. The reduction of the Federal grant was an unexpected blow to the State, but apart from the drought, and taking things all round, conditions have improved. The depression is passing away, though it has not yet entirely gone. Business has improved; the amount of money flowing into the Treasury is large, and it is hard to understand why the expenditure for the financial year just closed should have exceeded the revenue by £400,000. The Lieut.-Governor's Speech alludes to an investigation regarding certain bridges which, I take it, relates to the two at Fremantle. If experts state that either the traffic bridge or the railway bridge at Fremantle is dangerous and unfit for further use, or too costly to maintain, the Government have a right to replace it. On the other hand, if the Government intend to improve the bridges merely to provide work for unemployed, I say it is no time to undertake unnecessary public works, especially in view of the predicament in which so many sections of the community find themselves to-day. The financial position of the State is not at all satisfactory, and I am surprised that so much money has been spent in the metropolitan area. I do not say that good value has not been obtained for the money. The result has been to improve the appearance of the city considerably. It must be a great advertisement for the State when visitors find what a beautiful place Perth is.

Hon. C. B. Williams: As yet it is not nearly as nice as Albany.

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: Naturally it is not. The architects should be congratulated upon the wonderful improvement which, through their designs, has been effected to the appearance of the city. The Chief

Secretary, in speaking last week, commented on the large amount of money spent in the country as compared with the amount spent in the city. I admit that a large sum has been spent in the country, but I consider that a great deal more should have been spent in the country because the prosperity of the towns depends upon the prosperity of the people in the country. Large sums have been expended on the construction and maintenance of the harbours at the ports of Geraldton, Bunbury and Fremantle. I hope that the work at those ports has been finished, and that any money available in future for harbour works will be utilised at the port of Albany because there has not been an item of expenditure there for some years. Reference is made in the Speech to agricultural water supplies. The money devoted to such work in my province has been well spent. The work has been done satisfactorily and the people are fairly well satisfied. During the current year, however, the engineers should be asked to report on the provision of a comprehensive scheme for towns along the Great Southern Railway. With the exception of Albany and Wagin, the water supplies of many of the southern towns are in a dreadful state, particularly towards the end of the summer. At Katanning, for instance, efforts have been made to get water by means of wells or catchments, but either there is too little water, or else it is salt. The carting of water for railway use has involved heavy expenditure. This is referred to in the Speech as one of the causes of the loss sustained during the year. That loss, however, is small in comparison with the loss to farmers who have to cart water from the nearest town to their farms, or run their stock long distances to get it to water. A suggestion has been made that water should be supplied to those towns from the Stirling Range, from the Harvey dam, or from Mundaring Weir. To determine the feasibility of any one of those schemes is a matter for engineers, not for us. The Speech makes mention of the Canning dam. Undoubtedly the chief city of the State should have a good water supply; everybody expects that. There is a tremendous catchment mentioned in the Speech, but I hope that when the dam is filled it will end the periodical shortages of water and cutting-off of water in the metropolitan area. However, the work should be done economically and well, and the place should

not be kept for unemployables and sustenance men. Now I wish to make a few remarks concerning the group settlements, because things on those groups cannot continue as they are. My remarks will refer more particularly to the Denmark group settlement, which is in my province, lying chiefly between Denmark and Nornalup Inlet. I have been on other groups, but most of my experience has been gathered at Denmark. I have been told that Denmark is the most prosperous group of all but I am afraid that is not saying much in favour of the groups generally. I mention that aspect, however, because I do not want hon. members to think I have picked out the worst group. On the contrary, I believe I have picked out the best. I do not speak haphazardly, because I am in the Denmark country a great deal, in company with Mr. Hill, Mr. Piesse and Mr. Thomson. Generally speaking, the position on that group is most unsatisfactory. We saw kiddies with hardly any clothing, and men and women in pretty much the same state, being dressed in anything they can get hold of. The sight is pitiable, and further, the people of the Denmark groups have unsuitable food. On farms one expects to see butter, milk and that sort of thing; but I have often been impelled to ask Denmark settlers, "What do you people do for meat?" The reply is, "Occasionally we get a calf, but we are often short." One cannot live on milk and butter, however, and one wants meat often. I am afraid these people do not get it. With many of the settlers it is almost a bare existence at Denmark, and not living. I have in mind people who have been at Denmark for a long time. Perhaps some of them may be part of the original settlers who came out from England and landed at Albany, and possibly never visited Perth. Hon. members know what the position is. People are put on the farms, and a certain number of acres are cleared, and a certain number not cleared. There are suitable houses on the blocks, and those houses are maintained according to the capabilities of the wife—of course the daughter has to help. All these groups are under subterranean clover, and in some cases it is a question whether that is the best thing to be done. However, they are practically all under subterranean clover now. I do not know whether you, Mr. President, have ever been on the Denmark group; but I am

sure that if you went on that group, bearing in mind that it has been in existence for over 12 years and that several millions of pounds have been spent on it, the first question you would ask would be, "Where has all the money gone? Why is there not more land cleared, and more under clover?" I have often asked myself those questions, but have not been able to answer them. The position indicates bad management and bad supervision. Moreover, the labour put on the land there is not the best kind of labour. Rainfall at Denmark is over 40 inches annually, and it continues for a long period of the year. Further west and north that is not the case. Possibly the rain period on the Denmark group is the longest to be found anywhere in Australia, but unfortunately the Denmark sub-soil does not seem to hold the moisture long. Dry periods are experienced occasionally, with warm days; and then the grass seems to lose its food value. One reason for this is that the country is overstocked. Settlers seem to consider that they cannot live on their farms with fewer than 20 cows. Very few of them have 20 cows, but they try to get up to that number, which the farms will not carry. Some of the farms have swamps and others have running creeks, thus being placed in a better position. Most of the settlers have to feed their cows for the greater part of the year. The rains come early, before June; but there is nothing in the way of feed until the season gets on a bit. The settlers have to feed their cows on hay and ensilage and anything else they can conserve. A farmer has many expenses. There is some machinery to maintain. Certain concentrates must be bought or there will be no milk. The farmer has to maintain his family and pay interest. As I said before, he generally over-stocks his country in order to do this, and the result is a poor lot of cows. One does not see too many cows in good condition on the groups. Once or twice a week the cream is sent to Denmark, and once during every month the settler's account is made up, and interest is deducted. Sometimes the interest amounts to just about as much as the credit for cream. Occasionally settlers get so little out of their cream cheque that I hesitate to give the figures, as I very much doubt whether hon. members would believe me. Some of the settlers are living on £1 a month, father and mother and several

children. How they do it I do not know. It is a wonder. I have seen the monthly cheque down to almost nothing, and I have asked the people concerned, "What have you been living on during the month?" It appears that they get a little help from neighbours, but goodness knows how they do live. The children are often sickly, being obviously under-nourished. After interest has been deducted, the cream cheque is very small indeed. To run a farm one must have some sort of labour, but these settlers cannot afford to employ it. Most of the sons are not prepared to stay on the group after they reach the age of 21. They go away to look for lucrative labour. On the other hand, some of the sons stay and take up abandoned farms, perhaps adjoining the property of the parents; but again it is a case of existing and not of living. Last February I went through the Denmark group from Nornalup to Albany with the Commonwealth Grants Commission. Never in all my life have I seen things so bad as they were at that time. During that February, before the fires, I could not see anything on the farms at all. The cattle were just living on the hay stacks. What the settlers themselves were living on is a matter for surmise. I know that the members of the Grants Commission were astonished and in this morning's newspaper I notice that the Commission have condemned the land of the groups, perhaps unfairly. About three months ago I received a request from a settler to go out and see him. I went out with Mr. Piesse. The settler's farm has no swamp. We found about 11 cows there being fed from the stack. There was no pasture whatever—no grass. Neither were there any vegetables to assist in maintaining the settler and his family. I was curious to know what they did exist on. I asked the settler, "How much milk are you getting from those 11 cows?" His reply was, "Four gallons." I was astonished, and I debated in my mind whether I should ask the next obvious question. I decided to be the mug, and ask it. He said, "I get four gallons from all those cows." What on earth is that man doing? He had a wife and three daughters.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: A son and two daughters.

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: It is a puzzle what those people were living on.

The cows on the place were certainly not good cows.

Hon. A. Thomson: They were cows supplied by the Department of Agriculture.

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: They were absolutely starved.

Hon. J. Cornell: Were they worse cows than Sir James Mitchell's?

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: They must have been very bad cows, because a month afterwards they were culled out and six more cows given to the settler.

Hon. H. V. Piessse: They were sold for 25s. per head.

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: Anyway, Mr. Piessse and I had a talk with the man, who expressed himself as anxious and keen to stop on the place if only he was given a chance. Later on we spoke with the wife, and her attitude was very much the reverse. She was anxious to get off the group as fast as possible and take her children with her. I fail to see that anyone could have had a chance on that farm. That is my opinion as the result of a two hours' inspection. Generally speaking, when one goes over a group, one is apt to see only the bad places. I acknowledge that but honourable members must be aware that large numbers of settlers have walked off. To be convinced of that, one need only go through a group and see the empty houses. Some of the settlers on the groups say, "We will go off as quickly as we can if only we can get a discharge of our liabilities." Apparently some of them think that if they left the groups and won a Tattersall's sweep, the money would be taken from them for their back liabilities. Not a man I came across spoke of having any hope of decreasing the principal. The settlers only spoke about being unable to pay their interest. They said that if certain things could be done, they would be able to remain on the groups. If the interest could be reduced from 5 per cent. to 3 per cent., they said, they could make a do of it, particularly if they did not have to bother about the principal for a long time. The suggestion is now made that no principal should be asked for some years and after that, repayment should be spread over a greater number of years. For a long time the appointment of an appeal board has been sought. That is a very practical suggestion and I think it would work very well. Somebody is needed who could watch the settlers very closely and an appeal board

could easily observe their conditions. The settlers also seek more freedom. They complain a great deal about the fact that they are controlled by group foremen and supervisors. Some of them want to be linked up with abandoned farms, but the settlers are men without capital and whether they could manage their properties any better if the area were increased, I do not know. They would probably be worse off than at present. It might appear from my remarks that I am running the group settlements down. I do not want members to think that there is no hope in this Denmark district. I do not wish to infer that in the slightest. If the settlers only possessed a little capital they could build up good farms.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Is there no trouble with wasting disease there?

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: They have a cure for that now and not much is heard about wasting disease, which has, nevertheless, caused a tremendous loss in the past. Through the very careful experiments carried out, however, a cure has been found. Remedies were in existence previously, but they were too expensive. What I am leading up to is that in view of the lack of capital possessed by these men the Government should give them more assistance than they are getting at present. We must not forget that they are hopelessly loaded with debt. Their debts have been reduced two or three times, but are still too heavy for them. It should be remembered that the settlers are men who started with practically no experience; men who came from England lacking experience and with no private capital. I hope now that abandoned land is being placed in the hands of a firm to sell, that some of it will be sold to people with capital—if not to men in Western Australia, then to people from the Eastern States who possess capital—so that we may see whether a success cannot be made of farming in this area. I am sure that something can be done with the land. That success is possible has been proved by a number of brothers named Bailey who are on the groups now. They have a small area amongst a number of other, but they carry a tremendous lot of stock.

Hon. J. Cornell: What about Redmond who went there about 30 years ago?

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: He may have started with some capital and he had some

sons who went to the Murchison shearing, and made some money.

Hon. J. Cornell: Redmond had very little when he went there.

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: But then he had a very useful family to help him. He is not a Denmark settler; he is what is called one of the old settlers. He is not a group settler, but certainly he has made a success. He has a number of well-bred cows and a property that is well looked after. The Bailey brothers, to whom I referred—there were four of them—came from England. They went to the groups and took up some of this land. They happened to come along just when the Nornalup-Denmark railway was being built and a large number of men were being employed. They started a butchering establishment. Whether they did butchering in England I cannot say, but they started there as butchers which helped them considerably. At any rate, they did very well and were able to maintain their farms. Their country is only the same as the other land about there. They have very good farms. There is similar land between Albany and Denmark on which there are excellent farms, not only on the low-lying country but on the high country as well. In fact, all over the lower Great Southern there has been rapid development.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Kendenup is developing well, is it not?

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: Kendenup has very good land and bad land too, but it is developing very well indeed. There is a good class of farmer there and perhaps it is one of the most prosperous settlements in Western Australia.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: That does not come under the group settlement scheme.

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: No.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: It is run by private enterprise.

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: Rapid development is taking place all over the lower Great Southern. Ring-barking and clearing are being done on a large scale and cottages are being erected all over the place. One of the best indications of progress is the much larger quantity of superphosphate being used. That is always an indication of progress in any part of the State. Though it has nothing directly to do with the Government I hope superphosphate works will be erected at Albany. I have no doubt that in the near future a tremendous amount of

superphosphate is going to be used in those districts. More and more is being used every year. Naturally if there were superphosphate works there it would be cheaper for the farmers. Not only that but it would also assist the Government because it would be possible to send superphosphate away in the trucks which take down the wheat and now return empty. Although I said that this matter did not directly interest the Government, indirectly the Government are interested because any company establishing superphosphate works would have to get the land from the Government and the Government will have to provide the site. Fortunately that will not be very difficult. It will mean that a certain amount of reclamation work will have to be done. The site is there but it would have to be partly reclaimed. It would have to be chosen in conjunction with a site for wharves which will have to be provided as time goes on. There are no engineering problems; no silting. Dredging was done many years ago and the depth of water is the same as when the dredges left. It is a case now of dredging the material from one place and taking it to build up a wharf in another place. The old jetties have served their purpose. They now cost a lot for repairs and maintenance and should be done away with altogether. This reclamation work would mean an advancement in the southern part of the State. I wish to make a few remarks in connection with the freezing works. When the works were started the Government gave some assistance very promptly, and this has meant that the works have had a very successful initial year. Something like 35,000 lambs and 150 pigs went through these works and were exported from the State. I have been asked by the managing director of the works to express great appreciation for the way in which the Transport Board have met us. They have helped us in every way possible to push on the industry. They met us in every way possible last year, and appear to be doing the same this year. They agreed to do almost everything which has been asked of them but of course, only reasonable requests have been made. The same thing may be said of the Railways. We have no complaint whatever with regard to the Railways. They have carefully handled all the stock brought from the farms. The methods of transport have suited us down to the ground, and that is supported by comments received from London in connection with the state of the lambs reaching the market there. They have shown

evidence of careful treatment in transit as well as proper treatment at the works. I hope the association between the Albany Freezing Works and the Transport Board, and the Freezing Works and the Railways will operate as well in the future as it has in the past. I want briefly to refer to the tourist trade. We are spending only about £3,000 a year in this direction. Every other State, and countries elsewhere spend far more and make huge profits. I was looking at some French advertisements to-day and saw what is being done in France. People are invited to go there and are carried about very cheaply. We should be more active here, and if we cannot induce many people to come we should give those that do come every opportunity of seeing the State wherever possible. I am very pleased to see that there will be a Bill brought forward to deal with pastoral rents. Many of the stations are ten times worse off this year than they were last year, so it is hoped that rents will not be charged this year as from the 1st January to the end of June. With regard to the Municipal Corporations Bill I hope there will be a continuation of the debate from where it was left last year. I support the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

HON. H. V. PIESSE (South-East) [5.12]: I wish to support the motion and I shall be only too pleased to give credit to the Government wherever it is due. We in Australia had a marvellous opportunity of listening-in to the ceremony of the crowning of our King and Queen. I sincerely hope that His Majesty will be spared for many years to reign over the British Empire and that his reign will be peaceful, although at the present moment the war cloud is hovering over us and we do not know from day to day what is going to happen. I was pleased to see that the splendid contingent of Australian soldiers who represented Australia at the Coronation had returned safely. I was impressed when watching them march through the city of Perth by the great disability Western Australia is suffering through the abolition of our compulsory training of youth. Had that system been maintained we would to-day have thousands of men trained for our own defence in Australia. A trained man is in time of war a most necessary adjunct for the protection of our continent.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Did we have them in the last great war?

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: No, we did not have them.

Hon. C. B. Williams: What sort of a job did they do?

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: A very good one, and they will still do it, but had compulsory training been in operation we would have had 500,000 men trained to-day. Surely a trained man is most helpful in time of defence.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Explain what you mean by trained men.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: I had an early training in the military when I was 15 or 16 years of age, and I realise now what a great advantage to me that training was. One realises the value of such a training when he himself has to impart the knowledge to others in the course of the making of a standing army. The Lieut.-Governor's speech is a reflex of past Governmental work, and it also alludes to the Bills it is intended to introduce. I feel that I should congratulate the Lieut.-Governor for the manner in which he travels around various parts of this State. We in the country appreciate his many visits, and the valuable information that he is always prepared to give us. We are fortunate indeed in having such a gentleman to represent our King.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Does that mean that you are in favour of Australians being appointed as Governors?

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: As Lieut.-Governor, yes. Members will agree with me when I say how sorry we were to learn of the passing of Mr. A. McCallum, Chairman of the Agricultural Bank Trustees. The late Mr. McCallum had rendered exceptionally good service to Western Australia, and whilst perhaps many of us did not see eye to eye with him in political matters, we all gave him credit for the splendid work he did in the service of Western Australia. Unfortunately he did not get the opportunity to really prove his ability while he occupied his Agricultural Bank position, but I am sure had he been spared his administrative talent would have made itself felt at that institution. Our sympathy goes out to his widow and family. The Agricultural Bank Act has been in force for two years, and there are many amendments desired by farmers. I do not intend at this stage to refer to those amendments, because at a later stage I hope we shall have the opportunity of dealing with a Bill that has been introduced in another place. One matter I

notice with pleasure is the sale of abandoned farms that are being effected through the agency of a well known firm in this State. The Agricultural Bank Commissioners in their wisdom appointed the firm of Goldsbrough Mort and Co. as the selling agents for the farms. When I first read of the appointment I thought it was giving too great a monopoly to one firm, but when one notes the successful results of that firm's work, it must be conceded that the right thing has been done in placing the sale of the abandoned farms in the hands of one firm only. Goldsbrough Mort and Co. are widely known throughout Australia, and they have agencies everywhere. They are an honourable firm, and have stood the test of time, and to Western Australia now they are rendering good service in disposing of quite a number of abandoned farms. I should like to quote the figures of the crop averages in the wheat-growing States of Australia to show members how favourably we stand. Taking the years from 1925 to 1935—ten seasons—the average of New South Wales was 12.60 bushels, Victoria 11.83 bushels, South Australia 9.44 bushels, and Western Australia 11.62 bushels. The Australian average was 11.48 bushels over that period. In the same ten years New South Wales' average production was 49,700,000 bushels, Victoria's 38,600,000 bushels, South Australia's 32,600,000 bushels, and Western Australia's 36,000,000 bushels. The point I wish to make is that one-fourth of the wheat grown in Australia is produced by Western Australia with the very small population that we have being one-fifteenth of Australia's total. There is no doubt about it that our farming land here will still hold its own in price compared with that of the Eastern States. During last season there was a Reso tour through the agricultural districts of this State, and of the members who composed the party 50 per cent. were practical farmers and graziers from Victoria. I had the pleasure of travelling through Western Australia with that party, and the concensus of opinion expressed before the members of the party left for the Eastern States was contained in a letter the president of the visiting Resonians wrote to the "West Australian" newspaper. It was that the land in Western Australia in comparison with the carrying capacity of the land in the Eastern States was at least 25 per cent. cheaper than the price at which land in other parts of Australia could be

bought. Only a few weeks ago I received a letter from a man in Queensland who asked me to furnish him with an idea of the value of land in this State that would carry a sheep to the acre. Most of us are aware that between £5 and £6 per acre, is the value set out in this State.

Hon. L. Craig: Too high.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: It may be high, but any practical farmer who saw land that would carry one sheep to the acre would not admit that between £5 and £6 was too high. We can show to visitors land that we have worth 30s. an acre that will carry one sheep to two acres. That means that for £3 you would have the value of the carrying capacity for one sheep. We can to-day offer great value to the sons of Eastern States farmers, and I feel confident that the selling agency we are now employing on the work of disposing of our abandoned farms will be successful in that direction.

Hon. C. B. Williams: In other words, the sons of our own farmers do not want to go on the land.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: If the hon. member read the papers, he would know that to-day we have not sufficient population to absorb all the land that we should like to settle.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Our farmers' sons are working on the mines.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: Because the average farmer cannot afford to pay them wages sufficient to induce them to remain on the land.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Did not the Government of this country afford them every facility to go on the land?

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: Yes, they are offered every inducement to take up land. They are required to pay only 10 per cent. in cash, and no payment is expected of them for five years, and the interest rate is 5 per cent. If the hon. member knows of young men on the goldfields who want to take up land, he can assist them to do so. My colleague, Mr. Wittenoom, has told members all about group settlement, particularly in the Denmark area, but I should like to add something to his remarks because I have had the opportunity during the recess of visiting many group farms. I know one man to whom he referred who is producing only a small amount of butter fat, and unless more

money is provided to enable him to top-dress, he will not be able to carry on. There are definite instances in the Denmark area where different groups have been joined, but unless further assistance is rendered, there cannot possibly be reasonable production. After my last visit to Denmark, I took the opportunity of writing to one of the successful settlers in that district, and I should like to read to the House a letter that he wrote to me in reply to my communication. It is as follows:—

You say it is the policy of the Bank not to be unduly harsh and push men off the land. Such may be the case, but from what I can see, men are being deliberately starved off their holdings. I can give you proof that while actual evictions are not common, there are many cases of the ground being cut from under the settlers' feet so that they are compelled to leave. Do you realise that out of 200 group holdings, there are probably only 70 occupied to-day? The Bank in its policy of getting interest has linked blocks together, fondly imagining that the greater area will produce more revenue per man, but overlooking the fact that the average settler has not the physical and financial resources to work a big farm. Hence the district has been denuded of families, who probably are now adding to the difficulties of the providers of work in the city, and who are probably now on sustenance. There is less production per acre. Gangs of sustenance men are being maintained in cleaning up blocks which would never have been allowed to go back if the settlers had been unmolested. Frankly, I have no faith in consultations with officials; if they have any qualifications they are denied scope for their knowledge. Two years ago settlers were optimistic and progressive, and were producing more butter and pigs. Now the blight of interest has destroyed the optimism, and the deliberate action of the Bank in putting the settlers in arrears on the new valuations effectively stopped progress and placed fetters on the settlers indefinitely. I am of the opinion that the valuations generally were reasonable, but the farms were not going concerns capable of paying working expenses and interest on capital. The Bank's insistence on interest created an impossible situation, but the settlers, like the Israelites, are expected to make bricks without straw. It seems to be always overlooked in this country that success cannot be forced—to achieve in one generation what has taken two or three generations in other places is a formidable task. Intelligence and not dragooning should have been the policy of the Bank.

That letter is from a man who has carried on successfully in the Denmark district. There is no doubt that alterations will have to be made, and a more sympathetic attitude adopted by the Bank Commissioners

in the treatment of the group settlers. During the bush fire period last year, the Government went to the aid of the settlers concerned, and I congratulate them upon the steps they took. The public, through the good offices of the "West Australian," were marvellous in respect to the money they subscribed for those who had suffered such serious losses. Excellent work was done not only by the Police Department but by the settlers themselves, the sustenance men, and everyone else, who rallied to the assistance of those unfortunate settlers who had their homes burnt, had lost so many head of stock, and so much of their feed for the remaining stock. Although the fire was a serious one, I feel sure that good results will be obtained later from the properties that were burnt. I am not an expert in group settlement farming, but I have given a lot of thought to the question. I have also listened to what practical men have had to say. I have come to the conclusion that a board should be appointed, consisting of local men, who should be given full control by the Bank. These men would reside in the district and should control the work. It would not then be long before those settlers who received helpful advice and sympathetic treatment would become some of our best producers. I wish now to touch upon the port of Albany. I do not believe in praising one port to the detriment of another. There has been a controversy embracing the ports of Bunbury and Albany, but I am of opinion that every port should be allowed to handle all those commodities that are produced in its own particular hinterland. I hope the Government will consider the advisability of erecting a wharf at Albany, and dredging portion of the foreshore in order to provide more serviceable conditions. There is no doubt that superphosphate works will be erected at Albany in the not distant future. There has been great improvement in our grazing country and production has developed to a great extent. We have our freezing works and the fat lamb trade. Other resources are also being developed so much that the time must soon come when we shall have our own superphosphate works.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You must have them.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: When I was at the Primary Producers' Conference recently, I heard one delegate say there was sufficient

production from our existing superphosphate works without establishing any more. Already we have many factories that are engaged in much the same kind of production. Take the flour-milling industry. Thomas & Co.'s mill in Northam could, working three shifts constantly, produce sufficient flour with which to feed the people of Western Australia; notwithstanding which we have numerous other flour mills also in operation. It is only by competition that we can get the most effective method of production. With our great grazing capabilities and rainfall in the Great Southern, we must have superphosphate works before long. This would mean a saving in freight charges, and provide back-loading for the railways. In the Albany zone we are unfortunate in that a good deal of the hinterland does not come into that particular zone. I would instance Lake Grace and the surrounding districts, the production from which districts should go to Albany. We are awaiting the result of the deputation that will shortly ask the Government to give us bulk handling facilities at Albany. The growers of the Dumbleyung and Borden districts are very heavy producers, and they should have the same benefits as are received by other wheatgrowers in Western Australia. It has been said that unless these facilities are provided at Albany, on the present jetty system it will be impossible to handle wheat in bulk. I think about 80 per cent. of the wheat that is exported from Albany is shipped in bulk, because the bags are cut and the contents tipped into the hold. Surely the same facilities as are given at Fremantle should be given at Albany. These should be provided so that our wheatgrowers in the Albany zone may be put on the same footing as their colleagues in other parts of the State. I wish particularly to refer to the activities of Mr. Vaughan, who was a Government official for many years. He has rendered great service to the district by proving the bottlebrush country. His experiments have been exceedingly helpful all round. Then we have Mr. Henning, who in the last four or five years has proved that half-a-crown land can be brought to great profit. His first draught of fat lambs is now being sent to the freezing works, as a result of four or five years of concentrated work on land that was looked upon as worthless.

The Chief Secretary: What did it cost him per acre to clear the land?

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: Usually, when he closed his office in the afternoon, he would

go and work on the property, and had only the assistance of one man to bring that area into profit. I read in the paper that people are going from the wheat areas to the Albany district to take up this class of country. There is no doubt that in the area extending from Bunbury to Albany and Bremer Bay a tremendous population will be settled in time to come. There is no better country in Australia. Compared with Victoria, we are almost in our infancy as yet. After the Reso tour I took in the Bunbury and Bridgetown districts, I have come to the conclusion that there is nothing better in Australia than the area to which I have referred.

Hon. L. Craig: Tell your Mr. Hill that.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: He is a very enthusiastic gentleman and is giving great service as the member for Albany. He realises the value of the hinterland of which I speak. We know it has not had the development that has occurred in the Bunbury and Bridgetown areas, but I believe that eventually it will be on all fours with those areas.

Hon. J. Cornell: You want a summer rainfall.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: I note that the Minister for Agriculture has stated that the Department of Agriculture is going to be reorganised. I should like to make a few remarks concerning Dr. Sutton, who is retiring in October of next year. He has given good service to Western Australia and has travelled the length and breadth of the State. As a wheat expert he is foremost in Australia. I can speak feelingly about him. One of the most serious jobs he ever had was to train me when I was a boy of 16. He was the experimentalist at the Hawkesbury College where I was a student. I have always watched the wonderful work he has done.

Hon. J. Nicholson: We see the good results in you.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: When Dr. Sutton was a young man he had an opportunity to gain a great deal of information from the great Australian wheat expert, Mr. Farrer. When the doctor left, that expert said that New South Wales was losing one of the greatest wheat-breeding experts in the Commonwealth. I hope when Dr. Sutton retires his services will not be lost to Western Australia. We can ill-afford to lose the services of such a man. Although he is shortly about to retire, one has only to look at him to see that he is still men-

tally alert and very active. I feel sure that he will continue to give valuable service to the State. Many good men have passed through the Agricultural Department and have gone elsewhere. When they have reached the top of their activities, they have in many instances been taken by the Eastern States, or the Federal Government have offered them a better salary to induce them to leave this State. That has been very unfortunate for Western Australia. I remember the case of a young veterinary surgeon, who was in charge of research work at Denmark. I refer to Mr. Filmer. The people in the district were losing cattle by the hundred. They could not rear their calves, but owing to the work of this officer and his colleagues a cure for the disease was discovered. As soon as these men are trained for our benefit, the Commonwealth Government offer them more money and we lose them. If the department is going to be reorganised, such a rearrangement can only be effective if better accommodation is provided for the department. The present building is wholly inadequate. No research work, such as is required in agriculture, can be carried out efficiently in such buildings. I have seen the fine buildings housing the departments in the Eastern States. The millers in Western Australia recently spent £1,400 on a wheat-testing machine, which was presented to the Agricultural Department. This must prove of great advantage to our wheatgrowers. Although the instruments and machinery required for the research work are being made available, the buildings in which the plant will be housed represent a disgrace to Western Australia. Regarding rural relief afforded in Western Australia, the members of the board in charge of the work have set an example to the rest of Australia. When it is realised that 1,538 cases have been completed, members will appreciate that the director of the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Branch is to be congratulated upon the way the work has been expedited and carried out. The country storekeepers do not see eye to eye with the director and his board because an average of only 5s. in the £ has been paid to those men, who were instrumental to such a large degree in keeping the settlers on the land during the periods of depression and drought. Under the Victorian legislation, 10s. 3d. in the £ has been paid to unsecured creditors, and, in

my opinion, there are many sections in the Victorian Act that would make our legislation more workable if they were included in the Act. I do not intend to pursue that subject further this evening, because I hope that the House will be given an opportunity to discuss the question at greater length at a subsequent stage. With regard to the subject of orderly marketing, the Minister for Agriculture (Hon. F. J. S. Wise) has given the potato growers of the State ground for encouragement by informing a deputation that he intended to recommend to Cabinet that certain legislation should be introduced. The Minister is a practical agriculturist, and therefore we will await the legislation with interest. Members will be pleased to hear that the condition of the Minister, who met with an accident in Brisbane while on a visit there to discuss research developments affecting agriculture, is steadily improving. Orderly marketing represents an important and essential factor, particularly with regard to the potato grower and the dairyman. Carefully considered legislation is required in order to assist those two industries to be placed on a more profitable basis. It will interest members to note the average production of potatoes per acre in Australia during the decade from 1925 to 1935. The production per acre in tons for the several States was as follows:—

	Tons per acre.	
New South Wales	2.09
Victoria	2.56
Queensland	1.59
South Australia	3.76
Western Australia	4.11
Tasmania	2.54
Federal Territory	1.83

The fact that the Australian average is 2.52 tons per acre leaves no shadow of doubt that the Western Australian production over that period of ten years has been distinctly above the average, which it has exceeded by 1.59 tons per acre. It is also interesting to note that the production in this State was 1.49 tons per acre greater than that of Tasmania, although the latter State is to-day the greatest Australian producer of potatoes, both in value and quantity, while the quality of its article is undoubtedly high. The last-mentioned consideration is doubtless occasioned by the variety of the potatoes that are grown. In addition, the Tasmanian people do not hesitate to spend money in marketing their product in both Vic-

toria and New South Wales, while their transport facilities are so expeditions that the potatoes are put on board one day and are delivered the next day in New South Wales or Victoria. The handling is carried out expertly.

Hon. L. Craig: That is all voluntary work.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: I agree that it is so, but the point I want to make is that Western Australia is certainly producing more potatoes per acre than any other State in the Commonwealth. When Mr. Fraser was addressing the House, he stated that the Labour Government represented the only Administration that had ever provided a water scheme in Western Australia. No doubt the honourable member was too young to remember Lord Forrest when he provided the Coolgardie water scheme, nor does he recollect that since those days many other such schemes have been assisted by Governments. Mr. Fraser also referred to the Bill that is to be placed before Parliament this session dealing with State insurance. That measure will be most important not so much from the standpoint of legalising the State Insurance Office as from that of third party insurance. I stress the latter phase in view of the fact that yesterday's "West Australian" contained two columns dealing with motor accidents that had occurred throughout Australia during the week-end. Surely we should commence to deal with that matter by means of regulations under the Traffic Act rather than tend always to blame the insurance side of the problem. I am a firm believer in the third party risk insurance. It has been stated that the higher premiums being charged respecting motor cars will debar people from taking out insurance policies. It should be remembered that for a very small amount the car owner is able to take out a policy to cover the third party risk. The regulations under the Traffic Act require careful attention, and the Government should see to it that the law is more strictly enforced. On Saturday last I was driving along a road outside Katanning, and passed the ambulance van, which had had to make three trips on account of eight people having been injured, one fatally, when the car in which they were travelling encountered another that was driven along a cross road. In that instance, the life of one person was lost, and seven others had to be taken to the Katanning Hospital merely because, apparently, of the careless driving of another individual who did not observe the regulations.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Why not have compulsory third party insurance?

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: That is one matter to be considered. Last year, when I spoke during the Address-in-reply debate, I claimed that governors should be attached to all motor cars in order to control the speed. My remarks were ridiculed in some quarters, but I have practised what I preached. I still have a governor installed in my car, and I can set the pace at anything from 20 to 70 miles per hour.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: Do you keep it fixed at 70 miles per hour?

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: I keep it down to 45 miles an hour, and I cannot exceed that speed, because the governor prevents my doing so.

Hon. G. W. Miles: And that is too fast.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: Quite right, but still I think that is a phase that should receive the consideration of the Government. If at all practicable, I would like to see the installing of governors in motor vehicles made compulsory.

Hon. J. Cornell: What is required is a governor for some of the drivers.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: I was pleased to note from the Lieut.-Governor's Speech that a Bill will again be introduced to deal with pastoral rents.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: It may be to increase the rents.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: There can be no hope of doing that. During the recess I visited Mr. Wittenoom's station, where he had 39,000 sheep. He will be lucky if he shears 1,000 sheep this year. That gives some indication of what station owners have to put up with. Mr. Wittenoom decided to feed 2,500 sheep last year. He bought the hay at Northam and railed it to Mullewa, from where it was transported to the station. During the first week of feeding operations, the sheep developed a disease known as "pink-eye," the effect of which is to make the animals blind. In consequence, Mr. Wittenoom had to erect a hospital on the station. In that direction also he suffered serious loss. I know of these conditions, because my son happens to be a jackaroo on the station. There will be no shearing at that station this year. What they will do will be to take the plant to the water holes and shear as many as they can. I understand it is the intention on Mr. Wittenoom's station to keep one man to look after the windmills, and the station will have

to look after itself. That experience is not singular; there are many such instances. Many of the station owners have not the necessary finance with which to meet their rents, quite apart from carrying on the station routine. I am pleased to note from the Speech that the Municipalities Act is to be reviewed during the session, and that is a task long overdue. Some time ago I attended a road board conference in my district, and the chairman reported that the Minister for Lands had promised that a clause would be included in the projected legislation to permit the formation of bush fire brigades in the country districts, with the object of protecting the feed. That is a step in the right direction because the damage caused by grass fires is very serious. My mind reverts to an instance in 1925, when an irresponsible fellow in the Woodanilling district lit a fire that travelled through the Kataunna district and, in its progress, swept through my property, as a result of which I had to replace 2,000 fencing posts, and lost 300 stud ewes together with three or four haystacks. The hoofs fell off the animals because the fire raced along the grass under their feet. I was only one loser out of many as a result of that fire.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Was the property not insured?

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: The ewes were not insured. I had been breeding up those stud ewes for 20 years, and each of them was worth from £6 to £7. I mention that fact to emphasise that it is most essential that provision should be made to assist in the prevention of these fires. Some little time ago I travelled through the Karlgarin-Hyden districts with the member for Pingelly (Mr. Seward). We intended driving beyond Lake Varley. When we reached Graham Rock, we encountered the first rains for the season, and anyone who knows that country appreciates the fact that once the rain sets in, it is foolish to attempt to reach Lake Varley by motor car. But what struck me was this: we tried to send messages forward telling the people that we could not possibly be there to appointment, but I was surprised to learn that there was no telephone line in the district. Surely the State Government could bring help to those settlers by way of inducing the Federal Government to provide telephonic communication in that

back country. If telephones were provided, they would be very helpful in cases of sickness. Those people down there were promised a railway when they took up their blocks, but they have very scant communication in all respects. They are a splendid body of people; you seldom hear them complain, and when one goes amongst them they make one very welcome. I do hope the Chief Secretary will bring his influence to bear in an endeavour to have telephonic communication provided for those people. When we travel over our roads in Western Australia we fully realise the efficiency of the Main Roads Department. Unfortunately the Engineer-in-Chief, now approaching the statutory age limit, will be retiring at an early date. Mr. Tindale has given splendid service. In most instances the labour used has been sustenance labour, and members will appreciate that there is not always the same incentive for sustenance labour to work well as there is for normal labour. However, I consider that splendid work has been got out of those men and that it will stay there for many years as a monument to the excellence of those workers. It is easy to say that one can do anything with money, but unless good supervision and careful engineering were carried out, the result would not be satisfactory, even if money were shovelled into the roads. All our main roads, and indeed our subsidiary roads carried out by the roads department in various districts, are of great credit to those responsible. I should like to pay a tribute to our local authorities. They have rendered splendid service to Western Australia. For the most part they meet monthly, and they are good advisers both to Parliament and to the Government, keeping the Government and Parliament awake to the necessities required in various districts. All this work is carried out in an honorary capacity. Now one other point and I have finished: I do hope that the Government will not reduce the fox subsidy. There have been instances in which people have said that it should be wiped out, but I hold with the vast majority that it should be increased, nay doubled. Money, of course, is required for this purpose, and it has been suggested that £30,000 or £40,000 should be taken out of the land tax.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: And out of the trolley buses.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: Yes. This question of increasing the subsidy must be carefully considered by the Government, because we cannot allow the fox menace to continue. Already the pest is doing a great deal of damage. Then we have the native dog bonus. I have been told that those dogs are increasing tenfold because of the very small price that is paid for their scalps. I will support the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

On motion by Hon. H. S. W. Parker, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.5 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 17th August, 1937.

	PAGE
Question: Agricultural Bank, reverted properties ...	95
Address-in-reply, fifth day	95

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

QUESTION—AGRICULTURAL BANK, REVERTED PROPERTIES.

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Is the prospective purchaser from the Agricultural Bank of a reverted property provided with the mortgage document at the time when he enters into the contract of sale? 2, If not, does the contract of sale specify the interest and other conditions? 3, If not, is the purchaser supplied with information as to the probability of variation in the rate of interest, or in the conditions of the mortgage, and if so, at what stage in the negotiations?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, No. 2, Specifies usual conditions only. 3, Full information is available on inquiry.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fifth Day.

Debate resumed from 12th August.

MR. NULSEN (Kanowna) [4.37]: I congratulate the Premier upon his safe return from England and upon the fact that he is looking so well. Undoubtedly the trip has done him a great deal of good. It would be better for everyone concerned if many of our leaders were to make these trips. They are very educational. Those who go abroad see different systems and come into contact with people of a different psychology. I regret the Premier had not time in which to visit foreign countries such as Germany, Russia, Italy, America and so on. I was also sorry to learn from the newspaper of the accident which befell the Minister for Agriculture. I feel sure he would be more hurt by reason of being unable to carry out his duties than from the injuries he received, as he is a very hard worker and very sincere in all that he does. I was glad the member for Roebourne (Mr. Rodoreda) struck a new note. We hear so much that is merely traditional, and we are glad when somebody steps out in a new path, although we may not always agree with what is said. The hon. member certainly opened up a new track. I have said before I would like to see the Address-in-reply cut out altogether, but, after giving the matter further consideration, I feel it would perhaps be better if the duration of speeches were limited to 20 minutes. It is necessary that some time should be devoted to private members' business, and it is also necessary that too much time should not be devoted to that purpose. The Leader of the Opposition made many allegations against the Government. I suppose it is his job to do that. The Premier, however, in a very truthful and logical manner replied effectively to those allegations. Although when members criticise the Government they do not always say those things that are absolutely correct, nevertheless it is sometimes necessary for opposition to be offered so that the Government may have a chance to reply. I have much for which to thank the Government, and I appreciate what they have done in my electorate, the largest electorate in the State. Many other things, however, have not yet been done. That may be put down to the fact that money is not available to do everything that every member requires. The water