

to recommend the Western Australian farmer to refrain from growing wheat. I felt that our farmer should be encouraged rather to grow wheat, since, at the conclusion of the war, wheat is likely to be of considerably greater value than it is at the present time. Hence the Government of this State did not make any public announcement on the subject. There was no public announcement to make.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: How long is it since you received the London cablegram you have just read?

The PREMIER: It came in January last.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is not on the file.

The PREMIER: I do not wish to have any argument at all, but I may point out that this cablegram did not come to the Western Australian Government. As I have already told the House, the cablegram came to the Australian Wheat Board from the British Wheat Commission. The message was in the possession of the Australian Wheat Board, who decided to leave the matter to the individual States. In the circumstances, the Western Australian Government did not think it wise to alarm the Western Australian farmer and discourage him from wheat growing.

#### QUESTION—FIRE BRIGADES BOARD, AUDITOR'S REPORT.

Mr. HOLMAN (without notice) asked the Premier: Has the hon. gentleman brought to the House the auditor's report in connection with the Fire Brigades Board?

The PREMIER replied: I have not got the report. I do not know that it is necessary for me to enter into an explanation. The hon. member asked yesterday whether I would lay on the Table of the House a certain report. I said I would go into the question and give it due consideration. I do not know whether it is necessary for me to offer any explanation of the fact that I have not the report now in my hands.

Mr. SPEAKER: It is not necessary.

The PREMIER: The hon. member led me to understand that the report referred to is the report of one of the Auditor General's officers to the Auditor General. When the Auditor General forwards his own report to the Minister concerned, the Government will be pleased to lay the paper on the Table, if the House desires that that should be done. However, certain inquiries are being made; and until they have been completed I shall not be in a position to lay any paper in this connection on the Table.

#### BILL—DISCHARGED SOLDIERS' LAND SETTLEMENT.

Introduced by the Premier, and read a first time.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. MALEY, leave of absence for one month granted to the member for York (Mr. Griffiths) on the ground of urgent private business.

#### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

##### Eighth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

Mr. MALEY (Greenough) [4.54]: As shall direct my remarks chiefly to the question of land settlement from an agricultural member's point of view, I wish to take the opportunity of paying a tribute to the memory of the foremost son of Western Australia—I refer to the late Lord Forrest. If we look back we must recognise that Western Australia's land policy, which was initiated by the deceased statesman, is or absolutely in the best-interests of settlement and one framed with a full knowledge of pioneering difficulties, a subject with which Lord Forrest was intimately acquainted. As a member of the executive of the Farmers and Settlers' Association, I happened to be appointed to a committee who were to frame a definite land policy for that association and after exhaustive inquiries into the subject we are forced to the conclusion that we could do no better than revert to the original land policy inaugurated by Lord Forrest when he was in control of affairs in Western Australia. As to land settlement generally, let me point out that in no country have the pioneers of settlement themselves ever succeeded in the reward of their efforts and the enterprise has been reaped by the succeeding generation. But with modern methods we should be able to direct land settlement on such lines as will enable the pioneer to make good in his own lifetime. Up to the present our policy has been directed towards asking the selector in the first instance to buy his land and to pay for it at an exorbitantly high price; and we have imposed certain improvement conditions and settlement conditions. The third function of the settler has been to make a living. But, unfortunately, he cannot do the three things at once. The gravest problem confronting this State at present is to keep on the land the man who is already there; to make the conditions remunerative and more attractive so that he may be able to enjoy some of those comforts of life which his city brother enjoys. I was extremely interested to hear the leader of the Opposition, speaking on the Address-in-reply, remark—

The whole of our destinies are wrapped up in the agricultural advancement of the State.

The realisation of that fact induced the Government of three or four years ago to pass the Industries Assistance Act. The fundamental idea underlying the creation of the Industries Assistance Board was not, as some people think, to keep worthless farmers on the land by paying them the magnificent wage of 9s. per day, but the protection of the Government's own securities—nothing more and nothing less.

Mr. Munsie: What Government were responsible for that assistance?

Mr. MALEY: I presume the Labour Government. The Industries Assistance



Act was passed in 1914, when hon. members opposite were in power.

Mr. Munsie: That is correct. I am glad you give us some little credit.

Mr. MALEY: I give hon. members opposite all the credit they deserve. As regards the overcoming of certain difficulties pertaining to land settlement here to-day, I have heard one or two constructive suggestions from our friends opposite. One suggestion was to bring all unutilised lands along the existing railway system into use by imposing a tax on unimproved land values. Another suggestion, emanating from the member for Forrest (Mr. O'Loughlen), was to make life in the country more attractive by sending picture shows out there. This last is indeed a helpful and constructive suggestion. But, apparently, the farmer to-day is too hard-up to allow of even rural picture shows proving reproductive or profitable. As to the scheme, propounded so enthusiastically, of taxing unimproved land values, if hon. members opposite are so desirous of carrying that into effect, let me remind them that this State already has a tax on unimproved land values, and that they have the opportunity, if they wish to do so, of giving effect to their purpose in connection with the taxation Bills brought down. But it is false to think that the introduction of this tax is going to bring into production all that land which is lying idle alongside railways. It is impossible to tax the land into production. If hon. members want a reason for the land not being brought into production, they have not far to seek for it; they have an illustration of this reason in the condition of the agricultural industry at the present time. The industry has been so unprofitable that there has been no encouragement to others to invest their money in the direction of improving land beyond the purpose for which it is already used. People are not going to put their money into unprofitable concerns, and of recent years we have come to realise how really unprofitable agriculture is. This realisation has been brought about by the scientific methods adopted by the Taxation Commissioner, who is making us indulge in an annual stock-taking to find out exactly what our position is. If the Taxation Commissioner has achieved no other purpose by the system of accountancy which he has promoted in connection with the furnishing of these returns, he has made us understand exactly what our position is, and how little the interest is which we earn on the capital we have invested. With regard to land settlement generally, it is absolutely essential that a bold and comprehensive policy be adopted immediately. Ministers when touring through the country have received deputations from all quarters pointing out the exact position of settlement in the various localities. Many statistics have been supplied showing the cropping returns over various periods, and complaints have been made about the high values placed on the land thrown open for selection miles from a railway. It is important, in my opinion, instead of tiddly-winking with the position, to grasp it boldly and provide relief in various direc-

tions, such as in regard to arrears of rent and deferred interest and so on. The Government should immediately revise all conditional purchase leases and add the accumulated rent and payments due to the end of the lease. The Country party have assisted in bringing about the provision that exemption from rent, in the case of new selectors, shall be granted for the first five years. But why should not a man who has been struggling ever since 1910 receive similar relief? It is absurd to think that the man who has borne the heat and burden of the day under a wrong policy of settlement should not be entitled to take advantage of the five years' exemption from rents, especially if the adoption of such a course would have the effect of saving him. This is a matter to which the Government should give immediate consideration and bring into effect without delay.

The Premier: Why not empty the Treasury straight away?

Mr. MALEY: Better that than to let the settlers go off the land never to return. They have bought their experience, and heaven knows how much they have paid for it, and no effort should be spared to save them.

Hon. M. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): You cannot make a general rule about the payment of rents, because there are people who are in a position to pay.

Mr. MALEY: After all we have been paying rents with borrowed money and the deficit has not been affected one way or the other. It is only a book-keeping entry. Why not adopt the policy which I have suggested and tack the burden on to the end of the leases?

Hon. M. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): We cannot do it; no Minister can upset what Parliament decides.

Mr. MALEY: The Minister knows that I am not speaking through the roof of my head in connection with this matter, because I have brought more than one petition under his notice and the notice of the Premier. And if this kind of thing is happening in my district it must be happening in every other district in the State. I desire to say a few words on the subject of repatriation. I hope the Government will bring down their legislative proposals without delay, and that those proposals will provide that every soldier settler shall have some equity in his land, perhaps in the shape of a home, which will be a sheet-anchor to him. It is no use settling these men on the land and taking a mortgage over the property without creating some equity which will keep them there. One of the principal provisions, I suppose, will be an exemption from the payment of rent for a considerable period, perhaps ten years. But should a selector strike a series of seasons such as we experienced a few years back, he has no equity in connection with his holding, and he will simply walk off it and say, "Take your old dug-out back, I am off." It should be the bounden duty of the Government to establish something in the nature that I have suggested in return for the services the soldiers have rendered us. Another matter to which I wish to refer briefly is that of the lamentable centralisation policy which is followed by this Government. It is particularly emphasised at the port of Geraldton, to which



the whole of the produce of the hinterland should find its way. We are producing in those parts half a million pounds' worth of lead annually, and the whole of that is hauled past the very door of Geraldton to Fremantle, a distance of 400 miles. I understand also that there was a definite proposal made that there was to be no wheat stacked in Geraldton this year. The Scheme found that only half the provision which had been made for storing last year's crop in Geraldton was used, and then decided that they would only avail themselves of that. That means, of course, that we are going to have most of our wheat stored elsewhere. Again, a definite statement has been made that after the present appraisalment of wool at Geraldton is carried out that town is no longer to be a centre for wool appraisalment. I am quite aware that the Premier will say that this is a matter which comes within the purview of the Federal Government or the Central Wool Board, but surely the State Government should not stand idly by and see one of the principal towns of the State absolutely ruined, as it will be if Geraldton is no longer to be a wool appraising centre. A very strong protest should be entered to prevent the Central Wool Board taking the action it is said they propose to do. Another matter which I wish to bring under the notice of the Government, and particularly that of the Honorary Minister for the North-West—who I am sorry to find is not present in the Chamber—is in connection with the shipping trade. We claim that Geraldton is entitled to the trade of the North-West so far as produce is concerned, but a difficulty is experienced through vessels not calling at Geraldton on account of the bad management of the State steamship service. I would like to read a letter giving the point of view of the Geraldton District Co-operative Flour Milling Company, who should gain the whole of the North-West flour trade. The letter gives an idea of the shipping question at Geraldton—

Shipping at Geraldton.—For some considerable time prior to March last the s.s. "Bambra" was not calling at Geraldton for cargo. We think this boat was off the coast for some time and that this was mainly the reason for it not calling here. In April last we took up this matter with Mr. Willcock, and he arranged with the manager of the State Steamship Service for 50 tons of space for cargo for Geraldton to be reserved on each trip of the "Bambra" north, and we have advised the agents that we are prepared to fill this space on each trip. In regard to shutting out of cargo we find that just before the Singapore boats stopped calling here they had left cargo behind fairly frequently, but their agents have always given us reasonable notice that the boat would not be taking our cargo aboard. The "Bambra" has frequently shut out cargo, and on her last trip she shut out some eight tons. This costs us 2s. 6d. per ton to load and 2s. 6d. per ton to unload, including wharfage charges, and there are several other small expenses, such as stamps for bill of lading, etc. There is also the annoyance caused our clients, as these people could have easily ordered from Fremantle, with more cer-

tainty of having their orders shipped. The main complaint we have against the State Steamship Service is the lack of information given to the local agents and shippers. We can very seldom get any information concerning the boat. As we do not commence to load cargo here until the boat is advertised to leave Fremantle, we think that if the head office was to notify the local agent by wire, stating what ports they could not take cargo for, we could then stop the loading for those ports and thus save the above expenses. We have not gone into details to ascertain our exact expenses on cargo shut out, but from one or two amounts we have before us, the total amount during the past two years must be considerably over £100.

In this connection some months ago we had 60 tons of flour waiting on the Geraldton wharf for the State steamer. Arrangements had been made through the agent for lifting the cargo, and it had been run out on to the wharf in all good faith for loading. It cost the milling company 5s. per ton for loading and unloading and taking it back to store.

Mr. Teesdale: The department should have refunded the amount.

Mr. MALEY: In the Governor's Speech the return of the last wheat harvest is given as 9,303,787 bushels from an area of 1,249,762 acres cropped, which on an average does not amount to  $7\frac{1}{2}$  bushels to the acre. Seeing that the farming methods pursued by those under the Industries Assistance Board are perhaps the worst in the State, it is safe to say that the farmers under the board could not have harvested more than four or five bushels to the acre. This lamentable condition of affairs has been brought about by the extraordinary policy of the board in regard to cropping. The board's system is to reward a man according to the area he puts under crop, to increase his wages as the area increases. Thus, a man who crops from 160 to 180 acres is paid a higher rate of wage than the man who crops from 120 to 150 acres. The sliding scale continues until the maximum amount of assistance is reached with the area of 250 acres. A man cropping that area receives the magnificent wage so much criticised by hon. members opposite.

Mr. Munsie: Nothing of the sort; it is not criticised at all.

Mr. MALEY: Well, I will withdraw that. Clearly, under the system referred to, every encouragement is given to a man to put in as large an area as he can in order that he might get the maximum assistance from the board. It is a direct incentive to bad farming, and in my opinion the management of the Industries Assistance Board have themselves to thank for the low returns achieved by their clients. The board should be giving every encouragement to improved methods of farming. It would be a good policy if the board arranged to have half the area under crop and a great deal more fallowing done. Under the dirty conditions which have obtained during the past two or three heavy years, the land will not bear the scratched-in crop, and it would be wise if the Government



were to encourage fallowing by giving a bonus.

The Attorney General: In what way?

Mr. MALEY: By giving a bonus of, say, 5s. per acre, as is done in New South Wales. I would have liked to touch upon the question of the Wheat Pool, but I realise that this is practically sub judice at present. I hope that the report which the Government are awaiting from the Royal Commission will be expedited. I was surprised to learn from the Premier's statement made to-day that the Imperial Government have advised the Australian Wheat Board that it is essential to still encourage wheat production, because only a short time ago the Minister in charge of the Wheat Pool stated definitely on the public platform that the Imperial Government did not want our wheat. It is encouraging to hear that so recently as January of this year the Imperial Government declared that wheat production is more necessary than the production of stock or wool. I do not know how the Premier reconciles his colleague's statement with that which he himself made on the floor of the House. I would like to know why the Government did not earlier recognise that the production of wheat is just as important to-day as it was three or four years ago?

The Premier: I told the farmers so. I do not know that the Honorary Minister told the farmers not to grow wheat.

Mr. MALEY: At the recent conference, which has been so much discussed, the Honorary Minister said that the Imperial Government did not want our wheat.

The Premier: That is a totally different thing.

Mr. MALEY: No encouragement has been given to wheat production in this State. If it is essential that the farmers should produce wheat, surely a Ministerial announcement of a guarantee should have been given in time to encourage the farmers to put their best efforts into the areas going under crop. It was not until two months after tilling operations ceased that the Government said the obligation was on them to guarantee 3s. out of the 4s. 4d. per bushel.

The Premier: That was done long ago.

Mr. MALEY: No guarantee was given in this State, notwithstanding that a definite guarantee for the next two years was given by the New South Wales Government to the farmers of that State. No such guarantee was given here.

Mr. Munsie: And I hope it never will be without the question first being submitted to Parliament.

The Premier: That has been known for months.

Mr. MALEY: In conclusion, let me say I recognise that, perhaps, we are having some little difficulty in regard to finance, but that I think we ought to be prepared to bear our share of the burden, as other countries are doing. No Government of to-day can know exactly what is ahead of them, and I think the position in which we find ourselves is not

so very bad when compared with that of other countries.

Mr. LUTEY (Brownhill-Ivanhoe) [5.28]: I have a few remarks to make, notwithstanding that the member for Roebourne (Mr. Teesdale) may characterise them as so much gas. I am pleased at learning that the hon. member had devoted his recess to a visit to the Eastern States, and that in the course of his sojourning he acquired considerable knowledge which is likely to be of use in this House. I was particularly pleased that he should have gone to Queensland, and that even if he went to scoff he remained to pray, as he was man enough to admit when speaking of the activities of the Queensland Government in regard to the repatriation, in which respect he declared that Queensland is far ahead of the other States. I have here a pamphlet on the subject, entitled "Socialism at Work." I can honestly commend it to the attention of those hon. members who would know what Queensland is doing for her returned soldiers.

Mr. Johnston: Can other copies be obtained.

Mr. LUTEY: Yes, free of cost. I would like to refer to the question which was touched on last night in an admirable speech by the member for Cue in regard to the cost of mining requisites. I brought this matter up some nine months ago, but we have yet to learn that the Government have taken any steps to reduce the cost of mining requisites. It is most important to the mining industry at the present time. I believe the cost per ton has gone up 4s., which is a very serious handicap. The Government should grapple with this question, and see if they cannot relieve the mining industry in that direction. The Attorney General speaking the other evening said that it was the intention of the Minister for Mines to make the conditions of mining more attractive. I consider the Government have done very little indeed to make the mining industry attractive. We have made repeated requests for the appointment of a workman's inspector for the Westonia district. At the present time Inspector Crabbs has to deal with the districts of Coolgardie, Dundas, and Yilgarn, and no man can look after such a large area of country. It is impossible for him to carry out the work that should be done. The mines are long distances apart and the inspector cannot see that the workings are safe for the workers. Another inspector should be appointed for that district. It is said that no serious accident has happened in the mines in this particular district, but I would point out that it is wrong for the Minister to wait for a serious accident before waking up. Too loose methods and bad inspection in the early days a great deal of trouble on the Golden Mile is due. Instead of leaving pillars, the ore was gouged out in the face for hundreds of feet, and now the miners are reaping the benefit of the neglect of the past. Westonia is a young field, and the ore is likely to go to a great depth. It is now that strict supervision and inspection should be carried out to see that proper pillars are left so that in the future the mining industry will not suffer from bad inspection. If this had been done in the past many lives would have been saved