

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 1926

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

WEDNESDAY, 17 NOVEMBER, 1926.

The SPEAKER (Hon. W. Bertram, *Maree*) took the chair at 10.30 a.m.

QUESTIONS.

SUGGESTED APPOINTMENT OF BOARD TO INQUIRE INTO SOLDIER SETTLEMENT AND LAND SETTLEMENT GENERALLY.

Mr. W. A. RUSSELL (*Dalby*) asked the Premier—

“1. With reference to his promise made about two years ago, will he appoint a board, comprised of thoroughly practical men (non-official and non-partisan), to make investigations and report upon the problem of soldier settlement?”

“2. Will he also appoint a similar board to deal with land settlement generally?”

The PREMIER (Hon. W. McCormack, *Cairns*) replied—

“1. My promise has already been given effect to some time since when a Departmental Board was appointed, consisting of Messrs. Salisbury (of the Department of Public Lands), Sydes (of the Department of Public Works), and Byrne (of the Agricultural Bank). A report based upon their investigations was submitted by the board, and the recommendations made therein were, in the main, adopted by the Government. Since that time further reports have been received from Mr. Salisbury, and a Bill is now being introduced giving effect to the suggestions made by that officer.

“2. This is a matter of Government policy, and it is not the practice to make policy announcements through the medium of answers to parliamentary questions.”

DAMAGE DONE TO CROPS BY MARSUPIALS AND STATE ASSISTANCE TO MARSUPIAL-PROOF FENCES.

Mr. CLAYTON (*Wide Bay*) asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

“In view of the serious damage suffered by settlers engaged in agriculture and fruitgrowing on land adjoining State forest reserves through the destruction of their crops by marsupial pests, will he assist such settlers in the erection of marsupial-proof fences between their holdings and such reserves, either by the supply of wire-netting free of cost or by payment of half of cost of such dividing fences, as is provided by the Fencing Acts with respect to adjoining selections?”

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. T. Dunstan, *Gympie*) replied—

“No. The settlers referred to by the hon. member are in the same position as other settlers adjacent to vacant areas of scrub land in the hands of the Crown. Marsupial netting can be obtained by such settlers from the Crown on the same liberal terms as are available for selectors to enable them to protect themselves from rabbits and other animal pests.”

SHIPMENT OF COTTON SEED FROM AFRICA.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*) asked the Secretary for Agriculture—

“Relative to the shipment from Africa to Brisbane of about 3,000 tons of cotton seed by the ‘Clan Alpine’ now being discharged at Pinkenba, in view of the many legislative provisions considered necessary for the prevention of diseases of the cotton plant—

1. What precautions are being taken with respect to the possible introduction of insect pests from Africa through this shipment?

2. Who are the importers of the seed, and where was it grown? Has the seed been treated in accordance with the State Diseases in Plants Acts? If so, in what manner?

3. What precautionary measures are being taken to prevent the removal of any of this seed for sale for planting purposes?

4. In the interest of the industry, will the railway wagons used for the transport of the seed be properly disinfected prior to further use?”

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. W. Forgan Smith, *Mackay*) replied—

“1. As is always the case, adequate precautions.

“2. British-Australian Cotton Association Limited. The seed has been dealt with in accordance with the requirements of the Commonwealth Quarantine Act (Plants).

“3. Adequate precautions.

“4. Necessary action has been taken. I also refer the hon. member to my statement in the press which covers the matter fully. I am pleased to note that the hon. member is becoming fully seized of the necessity for every effort being made to preserve pure seed varieties, and that adequate precautionary measures be taken to prevent the dissemination of diseases in cotton.”

RESUMPTION OF OLD TRADES HALL BY RAILWAY DEPARTMENT.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*) asked the Secretary for Public Works—

“With reference to the resumption in 1918 by the Railway Department of the building now known as the old Trades Hall on the grounds of the alleged unsafe condition of the railway tunnel between Roma Street and Central Stations owing to the excessive weight of this building, and the exchange thereof of the freehold tenure of the present Trades Hall site together with a sum of £16,140 as compensation—

1. Has the weight of the old Trades Hall building diminished to any material extent since that year? If so, to what extent?

2. Who are the present occupants of that building, and what is the amount of annual rent payable by each occupant?”

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. M. J. Kirwan, *Brisbane*) replied—

"1. No.

"2. The present occupants of the old Trades Hall are—(a) Council of Agriculture, annual rental £363; (b) Teachers' Training College, annual rental nil; (c) Royal Geographical Society, annual rental nil."

PURCHASE OF IRON ISLAND, YAAMPI SOUND,
WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE (*Oxley*): asked the Secretary for Mines—

"In reference to the purchase of Iron Island in Yaampi Sound, off the coast of Western Australia, for the purposes of the proposed iron and steel works at Bowen—

1. Is this still the property of the State?

2. Has the Government put the island to any revenue-producing use; if so, what?

3. To what total amount is this island indebted to the Treasury as at 30th June, 1926?

4. What are the Government's intentions in regard thereto?"

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*) replied—

"1. The Government hold three leases on Cockatoo Island. Total area, 144 acres. Date of purchase, 21st October, 1920.

"2. No.

"3. Purchase price, £33,000 (£3,000 cash and £30,000 debentures carrying 6 per cent. interest), and, in addition, rents and mining fees £360, and stamp duty and legal expenses £368.

"4. The intention of the Government will be disclosed in due course."

REFUSAL TO PERMIT PUBLICATION OF SPEECH IN
PAMPHLET FORM.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*), without notice, asked the Secretary for Mines—

"As it is the intention of the Opposition to have printed at the Government Printing Office their Leader's speech on the charges recently made against the administration of the Chillagoe State smelters, what good reason can he give for his refusal to allow his speech on the same subject to be also printed therewith, so as to permit of both sides of the case being made available to the judgment of the public?"

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*) replied—

"I control my own speech. I regard it as a piece of impertinence—"

Mr. CORSER: To let the public have the opportunity of reading it.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES—

"No. I regard it as a piece of impertinence for the Leader of the Opposition to desire to print and publish my speech in pamphlet form. (Opposition laughter.) He may circulate his own speech if he so desires. I will do what I like with my own speech."

DISCHARGED SOLDIERS' SETTLEMENT ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. T. Dunstan, *Gympie*): I beg to move—

"That the House will, at this sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to afford relief to discharged soldiers who have obtained advances under the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Acts, 1917 to 1920, and who have been unable wholly to meet their engagements, and also to amend the said Acts in certain particulars."

Question put and passed.

SUPREME COURT ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. J. Mullan, *Flinders*): I beg to move—

"That the House will, at this sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Supreme Court Acts Amendment Act of 1903 in a certain particular."

Question put and passed.

GIFT DUTY BILL.

THIRD READING.

The TREASURER (Hon. W. McCormack, *Cairns*): I beg to move—

"That the Bill be now read a third time."

Question put and passed.

DISCHARGED SOLDIERS' SETTLEMENT ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(*Mr. Pollock, Gregory, in the chair.*)

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. T. Dunstan, *Gympie*): I beg to move—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to afford relief to discharged soldiers who have obtained advances under the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Acts, 1917 to 1920, and who have been unable wholly to meet their engagements, and also to amend the said Acts in certain particulars."

The object of this Bill is to afford relief in varying circumstances to soldier settlers throughout the State. The Bill is the outcome of special investigations which have been made by competent officers of the department, and after conferences with the officials of the Agricultural Bank and consideration of representations that have been made by various deputations representing returned soldier settlers. The relief will take the form of the writing off of accrued interest to certain dates, the adding of the amounts of special advances and short term loans to the loans for forty years; the writing down of capital in certain cases where

the circumstances are considered by the Minister to justify it; and the ratification of advances already made. In many cases the benefits proposed to be given under this Bill have been granted, and authority is sought to ratify the action of the Minister in writing off interest which has accrued to a certain date according to the particulars mentioned in the Bill. There is also a varying concession particularly applying to Stanthorpe soldier settlers.

Power is also given to the Minister to accept payment of interest in instalments in certain cases where the circumstances are deemed by the Minister to justify such action. Separate provisions are inserted with regard to the payment of short-term loans; and a variation is also made in the rental and the capital value of their lands.

The Bill also contains liberal provisions in regard to transfers and to personal residence conditions on what are termed surplus lands; that is, lands which have been proclaimed as surplus lands and which may be used as additional areas for soldier settlements. These are the main provisions of the Bill, and hon. members on both sides will agree that it is desirable that such a measure should be passed.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): The introduction of this Bill seems to be a step along the right road to assist soldier settlers; but I am very doubtful whether it goes far enough. I was rather disappointed to hear that there is to be discrimination between different classes of settlers. The discrimination I refer to is in regard to those who have sacrificed their health and comfort to meet the obligations they entered into, which they have succeeded in doing, consequently they will get no relief; but those who have taken their obligations more lightly and allowed interest to accumulate are being met by having the interest written off. It does not seem to be a fair deal. If there is going to be a revaluation, or if some of the funds provided by the Federal Government are going to be used for the amelioration of the conditions of returned soldiers, there should not be a differentiation against the man who has endeavoured to meet his obligations. Some of them have not made any attempt to meet their obligations, yet they are to be the ones to benefit.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It is the first time I have heard that some of them have made no attempt.

Mr. MOORE: Some of them have openly stated that they did not intend to pay when they went out—I have heard that said myself. I have heard of several cases in which hardship has been undergone by the settlers in their endeavours to meet their obligations. It seems a bit hard that those who have done that should not receive the benefit of a Bill like this, while others who did so much less are going to receive the benefit.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It will be a relief to the soldier settlers.

Mr. MOORE: Of course it is a relief to them; but there should not be any discrimination. The only discrimination there should be is that, if the Government place men on land which it is impossible to do anything with and place other men on good land, then those who are put on poor land should get greater consideration than those

on better land; but, so far as I can gather from the Minister, the Bill is only going to apply to Stanthorpe and to a certain extent to Atherton.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It will apply generally for varying terms.

Mr. MOORE: I understood the Minister to say that it was chiefly to apply to Stanthorpe.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Oh, no, I said there was a separate concession.

Mr. MOORE: I have not had the opportunity to read the Bill yet. As I said before, some men treat their obligations much more seriously than others do. Some are prepared to accept everything that is given to them and not bother about paying the Government, as they know there will subsequently be an agitation for a reduction of payments. Those who do their level best to meet their obligations and have sacrificed a great deal are to be given no assistance under this measure, while those who neglect their obligations are to get the benefit. I agree with any assistance being given in this direction.

Mr. FERRICKS: According to your argument, you would give the compensation paid to an injured worker to a man who was not injured at all.

Mr. MOORE: This is not a case of one soldier meeting with an accident and another not doing so. I am talking of men of the same class, with similar blocks of land, one of whom makes an effort to meet his obligations and the other does not. Yet under the system of the Government the man who meets his obligation gets nothing. I cannot agree with the logic of the hon. member for South Brisbane at all. It does not seem fair that those who have worked their hardest to meet their obligations are to get no assistance, while those who have not done so are to be assisted. It does not seem quite fair.

Mr. HARTLEY: According to you, all concessions should be made the same.

Mr. MOORE: I do not say that at all, but I say that there should not be as great discrimination. If there is justification for assisting soldier settlers, the work which a man has done in meeting his obligations should be taken into consideration, just the same as the case of the man who has not put forward the same effort.

Mr. HARTLEY: Apply that to private enterprise.

Mr. MOORE: This is private enterprise. The soldiers are put on to blocks of land and they endeavour to make a living, and there is discrimination going on. Apparently there is going to be discrimination in certain areas, because the settlers in Atherton are to have a reduction in valuation and rent whilst the settlers on Cecil Plains are not going to receive the same treatment.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: What do you suggest?

Mr. MOORE: I suggest that we have a thorough investigation of the whole position made by a board, which will take into consideration every factor in the case and bring up a recommendation with a view to clearing up this question once and for all. We all know that a big loss has to be faced, and that the soldiers on some blocks

Mr. Moore.]

are not going to be in a position to pay the money they owe. Under those conditions we must recognise that a lot of money has to be written off, and I would rather write it off now and be done with it and give the soldiers a fair chance—make a clean sheet rather than give more concessions here and there.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They are quite large concessions.

Mr. MOORE: They may be large concessions; but the concessions in the previous Bill were not very large, and now we have to deal with a Bill making further concessions. I would like a board to go into the whole thing and see what prospect the soldiers have of making a success of their holdings. If they find that it means writing off a lot more, then let us write off rather than keep the settlers struggling all the time. It is far better to put them all on one basis than to discriminate between certain districts and certain men. When the Bill comes before us we shall know more of the proposal. Just now I look at the question from the point of view of what has been told us by the Minister, according to whose statement the Bill does not seem to go as far as it should to be satisfactory.

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): The time has come when, instead of tinkering with these matters, we should have a comprehensive Bill which will give once and for all the whole of the concessions which the Government intend to make to soldier settlers. Hitherto there has been an agitation at this place and that place, with the result that the soldiers in each case get temporary relief, which only carries them over a period of a few months. Then the same situation arises, and they come along again, and again the Minister gives them temporary relief. Why not clear the matter up and be done with it?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Are you against the advisableness of introducing this Bill?

Mr. MORGAN: I am not against it at all, but I want to know as much as I can so that I can judge whether it would be worth while amending the motion by omitting the words "in certain particulars" so that we can amend the Bill in such a way as to give permanent relief. If there has to be a loss, let us cut that loss and be done with it and not have these men holding conferences year after year, and then coming along with a view to squeezing a little bit more from the Government. The Government always endeavour to give them as little as they possibly can to satisfy them for the time being. That is not calculated to bring about permanent settlement, and the time has arrived when the Government should say, "We are prepared to go so far. This is the most liberal concession we can grant under the circumstances, and we are not going any further." The sooner the Government recognise the necessity of doing that the better.

There is no doubt that what the Leader of the Opposition has said is correct in many instances. Some of the soldier settlers have denied themselves and their wives

[11 a.m.] and families in order that they might meet their obligations to the Government, whilst others have denied themselves nothing. The return to the settler

[*Mr. Moore.*

who made no attempt to meet his obligations might have been equal to that obtained by the settler who wished to meet his obligation, but the former did not care a rap, knowing that, if the necessity arose, he could join with others in an agitation for concessions. According to the Minister, the Bill is to extend consideration to the man who has denied himself, his wife, and his family nothing, and will penalise the individual who has done his utmost to meet his obligations. That is not fair.

Mr. HARTLEY: You wish to subsidise success.

Mr. MORGAN: The Government desire to subsidise failures. It will have the effect in the future of encouraging the settlers not to meet their obligations, but to fall into debt with the view eventually of asking for Government assistance. If we desire to encourage the proper class of people to remain on the land, then we should encourage the man who meets his obligations.

Mr. HARTLEY: What would you do with the failures?

Mr. MORGAN: Should we encourage settlers to become failures? If there were two settlers on the same class of country with the same opportunities, and one did not endeavour to meet his obligations and fell into debt, afterwards securing Government assistance, what would be the opinion of his neighbouring settler? He would naturally say that he should have done exactly the same thing and not bothered about endeavouring to meet his obligations. He would conclude that he should have allowed his obligations to accumulate, as in that way only would he be able to obtain some assistance from the Government. Unfortunately, that is what is happening, not only in connection with soldier settlements, but in connection with land settlement generally. Recognising that soldier settlements have been a failure in Queensland, we should immediately introduce a Bill, cut the loss, give the very best terms, and say to the soldier settlers, "We have gone as far as we can. We cannot go any further. You must now either sink or swim. They are the best terms that the Government can offer." The sooner that is done, the better it will be for all concerned. That would be preferable to having the soldier settlers asking for relief year after year, and the Government year after year granting as little as possible. I hope the Bill will be so liberal that it will assist soldier settlers to such an extent as to render it unnecessary for them again to seek relief from the Government.

Mr. HARTLEY (*Fitzroy*): I am very much surprised at the attitude taken up by the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for *Murilla*. Either the Leader of the Opposition is thoroughly illogical or else he is opposed to the Bill altogether. He complains that the Bill is unfair because it will help the man who has not been able to "make a do" of his soldier settlement, and by helping him we shall be penalising the man who has been successful. In other words, because a number of soldiers have been successful there is no need for this Bill. That is the only interpretation of the hon. gentleman's argument.

Mr. WARREN: He did not say that.

Mr. HARTLEY: He may not have said those actual words, but that is the effect of

his argument. He complains that the Bill is unfair because the man who has struggled to make a success of his farm will obtain no relief in the way of writing off of interest, etc. On the other hand, the man who has not been able to meet his obligations will be assisted. In stating that there is no need for the Bill because a number of soldier settlers have been successful, and therefore those who are not should have been successful, the hon. gentleman absolutely eliminates the human factor. It has always been contended by hon. members opposite that, if two men are placed on the same job, one will outstrip the other in a few months. The Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Murilla both ignore that fact now. They ignore the different conditions under which many of the soldier settlements were taken up.

I am pleased that the Bill has been introduced, because a lot of those men who have not as yet made a success of their farms are just as good as a number of men who have done so. Their non-success is due to the fact that different factors have been operating. Some of the soldiers were fortunate in the first instance in being able to get quickly on to their farms and with the least administrative expense. Some were settled on specially favoured areas. Other men who have been settled a couple of miles distant have found it more difficult to "make a do" of it. They took up their selections under different circumstances. They had to meet greater expenses, and were delayed in getting a start; and those differences meant everything to them in the matter of success or failure. If they had been able to obtain a successful start and overcome the pinch of the first couple of years, they, too, would have been successful. These men are just as much entitled to help as the men who have made a success of their farms. The men who have made a success of their undertaking will not begrudge any assistance that may be given to those who have not been able to do so up to the present. It must be recognised, too, that some soldiers were absolutely unsuitable as settlers, and did not do anything to bring about their success. They are not the men who are working their farms unsuccessfully to-day. They have passed out long ago. They were too shrewd to remain on their farms, and after they received all they could they got out; but the man who was honest, who was intent on success but has been a failure up to the present, is still on the farm attempting to struggle through. No one will cavil at whatever assistance the Government may give them. I hope that the assistance the Government will give them will assist them to struggle through and make a success of it.

The fact cannot be ignored that a number of the failures in the soldier settlements were due to administrative ineptitude. It was not altogether the fault of the Administration, for they had a big problem to handle. They had to handle it quickly, and were without any machinery or experience at the time to assist them in doing so. In the process a number of men were unfavourably treated, but the additional assistance that the Government will give them now will enable them to "make a do" of their farms. Boiled down, the argument so far is that, if a man once fails, then no power on earth can make a success of him. That is not the policy of this party.

Mr. EDWARDS: That is not the argument or policy of this party, either.

Mr. HARTLEY: That is the argument so far as the discussion has gone. The country which says to its inefficients and failures that they have no right to appeal to the Government for assistance to be helped will not progress very far; but this Government will build up from the bottom, and not from the top.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): The specious argument which has been put forward—the Opposition are not in favour of assistance being granted to soldier settlers who are "up against it"—is not fair. The attitude of the Opposition has always been that all soldiers should be helped, and sooner or later a measure giving effect to their arguments will have to be introduced. If that assistance is not forthcoming in this Bill, then the Government, sooner or later, will be compelled to introduce the measure that the Opposition desire. From the information the Minister has supplied this Bill contains a measure of the relief which has been claimed by the Opposition to be inevitable ever since soldier settlements were established in this State.

At 11.10 a.m.,

Mr. F. A. COOPER (*Bremer*), one of the panel of Temporary Chairmen, relieved the Chairman in the chair.

Mr. CORSER: It is not only the man who has failed. The conditions that were offered him made it imperative to a great degree that he should fail. Men of practical experience and agriculturists of years' standing would have failed. It is therefore not strange to anybody familiar with the facts that these returned soldiers have failed. In 1916 I predicted that this would be the result of the efforts of the Government, and I asked that greater leniency should be manifested by the Government when dealing with soldier settlement.

This amending Bill seeks to afford relief to discharged soldiers who have obtained advances under the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Acts, 1917 to 1920. We had the initiatory measure in 1917, and "Hansard" for that year, at page 126, will show that on private members' day I moved—

"That, in the opinion of this House, the time is opportune to make easier the conditions of soldier settlement, and to provide that this State's Government financial assistance to returned soldier settlers should no longer be less than that available under ordinary settlement conditions."

That motion was opposed by the Government, and the Opposition fought for weeks in the endeavour to persuade the Government to provide more liberal assistance to our soldier settlers. We endeavoured to assist the Government in their supposed desire to assist returned soldiers, and our one idea was to prevent the bringing about of such a state of affairs as exists to-day. We predicted that, if the Government were not more lenient in their treatment of returned soldiers, the existing deplorable state of affairs would come about. The Commonwealth Government were liberal enough to provide advances to the extent of £625 to individual returned soldiers, but this Government would grant no advance.

Mr. Corser.]

Mr. HARTLEY: Do you say that the soldiers are a failure as settlers?

Mr. CORSER: I do not, but I claim that the conditions imposed by the Government necessarily caused our soldier settlement scheme to be a failure. The conditions are not even as liberal as those applying to the ordinary settler, and God knows the ordinary settler has a bad enough time of it with the various Acts of Parliament and restrictions imposed by this Government.

From what the Minister has said, this Bill does nothing but write off such things as the Government cannot secure. There is no generosity at all in the mind of the Government. They should put into the melting pot the whole of the conditions applying to our soldier settlers and bring in one comprehensive Bill to reconstruct those conditions on a much more liberal scale. We should have given our soldier settlers freehold at the start, and land such as our ordinary settlers would go on.

The PREMIER: Are you willing to give them freehold at the price we paid for it?

Mr. CORSER: You paid nothing for Beerburum.

The PREMIER: You are hedging now.

Mr. CORSER: I am not. I say we should give to the soldiers the freehold of the land.

The PREMIER: At the price we paid?

Mr. CORSER: One cannot make a more direct statement than that. The New South Wales Government are prepared to advance up to £3,000 to every individual soldier settler, the advance to extend over a period of forty years on any farm that was a paying proposition. We insist on giving the soldier settlers perpetual leasehold and charging them £100 for every 4 or 5 acres, without giving the man a chance to see the block.

The PREMIER: I do not know how the soldiers stand you as a member of the Country party.

Mr. CORSER: No, because it is beyond the understanding of the hon. gentleman. If the hon. gentleman knew the conditions under which these unfortunate individuals labour, he would understand my attitude. We hope, as time goes on, to educate the Premier in this regard as well. We live in hope. If the Premier would agree to the suggestions of the Opposition now—

The PREMIER: I asked you a plain question.

Mr. CORSER: One could not give a more direct reply than I gave—that I believe that the soldiers should be given the freehold of their farms.

The PREMIER: At what price?

Mr. CORSER: Give them the freehold of their farms. Instead of the Government amending the errors of the past and bringing in an amending Bill based on a generous policy and recognising the losses made by the soldier settlers, they are simply going to write off something that they cannot get. The general principal of the debt remains on the soldier's head, and he has to carry that burden right through.

The PREMIER: It is on his head now. It was on his farm before.

Mr. WARREN: It is on the settler.

[*Mr. Corser.*]

Mr. CORSER: It is on the settler, and, if he transfers to another farm—some of them have gone to other settlements—that burden of debt follows. I sincerely hope the Minister will extend a far greater amount of generosity to our soldiers, and I suggest that he withdraw the Bill and introduce something that will be of value to the soldiers and in the best interests of the State—a Bill that every section of the Committee can support—one that will be in the interests of the soldier settlers to whom we should give a generous deal, which this Government have refused to give ever since 1917.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We propose to give them relief.

At 11.16 a.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. WARREN (*Murrumbidgee*): I would not suggest that the Minister should withdraw the Bill, but I would suggest that he broaden it. Candidly I do not think that there is much being given away under this Bill. I believe, with the Leader of the Opposition, that there is a class of settler who needs to be included in the Bill who has not been included. At a conference held the other day it was particularly stressed that there were men who had actually been left money and had spent it, and who had borrowed money to pay their debts. They faithfully carried out their contracts, and this Bill will not assist those people. The Minister told a deputation the other day that some of the soldier settlers were making £1,000, and I believe there is some truth in that, but the Leader of the Opposition was not speaking for those people at all.

The PREMIER: You know how difficult it is to do what you ask.

Mr. WARREN: I agree that this is a very difficult proposition.

The PREMIER: I went through it at one time.

Mr. WARREN: I know the hon. gentleman went through it, but he did not carry out his promises.

The PREMIER: I did not make any promises.

Mr. WARREN: The hon. gentleman did make promises.

The PREMIER: I would not allow your Beerburum crowd to come down and intimidate me, and I will not allow it now.

Mr. WARREN: Nobody stands for intimidation.

The PREMIER: You stood behind that chap McDermott.

Mr. WARREN: I do not think McDermott attempted to intimidate anybody. I read through his statement, and, allowing for a little bit of "lip" and the freedom of the English language, I do not think he wrote anything revolutionary.

The PREMIER: The Federal Government and ourselves have had a good deal of experience of McDermott.

Mr. WARREN: I am not going into that—I do not want to go into it. If the hon. gentleman was wrong, I sympathise with him. I do not think that the Premier of the State or the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth should have been put in a false position. I am not going to justify

something that is wrong, but I want to try to get things made right. There is no justification in trying to back up something which is wrong, but there is justification in trying to clear this matter up.

The PREMIER: Do you think there is any justification in demonstrating to try to make Parliament do something that it does not want to do?

Mr. WARREN: There was no demonstration to try to make Parliament do anything at all.

Mr. WEIR: You tried to work up a demonstration the other day.

Mr. WARREN: That is a lie.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I must ask the hon. member not to indulge in personalities. I hope he will deal with the merits of the question under consideration.

Mr. WARREN: The hon. member for Maryborough made a gross misstatement of fact.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must not engage in cross-firing with an hon. member on the opposite side.

Mr. WARREN: I do not want to have any cross-firing, but the hon. member for Maryborough made a misstatement, and I do not allow any man to come into this Chamber and make false accusations against me.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must deal with the question.

Mr. WARREN: I would like to see a general resurvey of the soldier settlements. No one knows better than the Premier that patchwork of this description is doing no good. The soldier settlers are so important and their value so great to the State that we should do something to save their very important energy to the State. These men have given not only their labour but have put their very life blood into the work of trying to make a living.

I want again to impress upon the Secretary for Public Lands that no good will be done by any mere patchwork. Not only do we want a resurvey of soldier settlements but we require a resurvey of the whole of our lands. It is no use wasting energy on land that is no good. It is a great waste of effort to have men on soldier settlements delving year in and year out, when no one can produce anything worth while from the land there. I want the Minister to take a broader view. It is all very well for hon. members opposite to say that we want to do something for somebody who is well off and prosperous. We do not care about those who are prospering; we only care about those who are living from hand to mouth. We want to make these men useful to the State.

Mr. HARTLEY: That is not what your Leader said.

Mr. WARREN: The hon. gentleman distorted what the Leader of the Opposition said, and wilfully attempted to mislead this Chamber in regard to that. There is no such thing as going to the sugar settlements where men are making money—the Leader of the Opposition spoke for men who are eking out an existence, paying their interest and living from hand to mouth.

Mr. HARTLEY: He did not. He said we were going to penalise the man who has paid his interest.

Mr. WARREN: So you are. I can instance cases where men have borrowed money to pay their interest. I want to deal with the question of the man who has retired from the settlement and who has been threatened with the issue of a writ. Such men are not to be dealt with under this Bill, and I consider that matter should be dealt with in the general reorganisation which I suggest. We want to deal with it; but, if the Opposition in Committee should move amendments in that direction, the Minister in charge of the Bill would say that the Governor's message did not make provision for them. Therefore, I beg to move the following amendment:—

“Omit the words—

‘in certain particulars.’”

That will give the Committee the right, when the Bill is presented, to deal with the whole of the Acts in question. I do not doubt that the Minister is sympathetic with these men, nor do I doubt that it is to a certain extent a matter of finance. I am not here to belittle the hon. gentleman in any way. I admit that a very stringent financial position has caused part of the trouble; but it will never be remedied until the Government go into the question in a comprehensive way. Only by dealing with the question in a general manner can they conserve the energies of the soldier settlers of Queensland.

The PREMIER (Hon. W. McCormack, Cairns): I suppose that in the Parliaments of Australia there is more loose talk about soldier settlement than about any other subject. All the Governments of Australia, as well as the Governments of other countries which participated in the world war, found themselves up against a set of extraordinary conditions when the conflict ended; and the countries concerned made efforts of varying kinds to meet what was then a great need and probably a great danger. We must examine the whole question of soldier settlement if we are to get any sort of a general view of the difficulties which Governments have found themselves in over this question. They were faced with thousands of men returning from the front, for whom there was no employment, and they rushed in to provide means of absorbing them. The very nature of the conditions which existed was not such as to lead to the best solution of the problem. Australian Governments had not only to find land for settlement, but they also had to deal with the very menacing problem presented by having tens of thousands of soldiers unemployed in the capital cities of the Commonwealth. Every country in the world found itself in that very difficult position, because these men, having been trained for four or five years or more and having returned after having been promised the whole universe if they won the war, were not going to take the dilatoriness of the Governments lying down. So an immense problem faced these Governments, which, if it had not been met, might have meant an internal revolution.

It is quite obvious to any thinking man who follows the history of this problem since the war why so many mistakes were made. It is easy for us to criticise. When I went

Hon. W. McCormack.]

to the Department of Public Lands, I was astounded to think that the Land Settlement Committee could do things which appeared so foolish to me; but, so soon as I took a comprehensive view of the situation and studied the problems facing that committee—a problem not only of land settlement but of other things—I came to the conclusion that probably I would have done the same myself if I had been a member of the committee.

The hon. member for Windsor knows well from experience the difficulties and problems with which we were faced. Arising out of that position we have soldier settlers, some good, some bad, and some indifferent. Mistakes were made, but they were certainly not intentional mistakes. They [11.30 a.m.] were mistakes made with the very best of intentions; but the results have been bad. The failure of soldier settlements has not been due entirely to the conditions outlined here to-day. The first and obvious reason for failure—it should be a lesson to Governments in the future—was in attempting to place upon the land a great mass of men who had no previous experience on the land.

Mr. WALKER: The biggest failures have been in Canada.

The PREMIER: No matter how many other factors are dragged into this question, the basic cause of failure of soldier settlements was in endeavouring to take thousands of men with no previous experience and force them to become cultivators of the soil, when we know that it takes hundreds of years to make a race of cultivators, and that the art is not acquired by people overnight simply because they are soldier settlers.

Over-capitalisation was another cause of failure. Everything rose in price. The labour and the material that went to make the soldier settlement were at top prices. The very house that the settler lived in was roofed with iron costing £80 per ton. Everything was at top price following on the war. With that capitalisation placed upon blocks of land which under ordinary circumstances in many cases would not have been profitable, how much more difficult must it have been to attempt settlement under such conditions? We found later on that the soldier settlers were not succeeding. How could they succeed? Many of them without any previous experience took on the job because nothing else was offering, and, while the advance was available, they spent it and had a good time. Many of them—good sincere chaps—spent their gratuity money and money they had saved on a block of land or in occupations in connection with which they had no chance of succeeding because they had no previous experience. They embarked on industries in which other men had given a lifetime of work and who are to-day having a job to make a living. How could they, with the material at their disposal, be expected to be a success in an experiment like this?

The charge is made that the Government should have done more than they have done. One has only to view the financial position to find that the men for whom the hon. member for Burnett is shedding tears have never met any of their obligations. The land, the building, and the machinery have in many cases been given to them, because

they have not paid for anything. They actually have the land, they have the machinery, the plant, the fruit trees, and everything else provided for them, and very few of them have paid a shilling to anybody. How can there be all this hardship because of the action of the Government?

Mr. WALKER: At the same time you must admit that some of the land was absolutely rotten.

The PREMIER: I do not wish to be drawn away from this material point—that they had the land for nothing, and they have had it cleared for nothing.

Mr. MAXWELL: The land was no good.

The PREMIER: They have had their fruit trees and their houses for nothing; and they have paid nothing for any of these items, and, in spite of all, they have not been able to succeed. Is it not time that we gave a little thought to the position? It is futile for the members of the Opposition to tell the public that the Government are not granting concessions. The soldier himself has taken the whole of it as a concession. He has paid nothing. How, then, can the argument be sustained that if we were more liberal they would succeed, when I show hon. members conclusively that we have given them everything they have got, and still they have not been able to succeed?

Mr. O'KEEFE: A second Chillagoe.

The PREMIER: That is so; they have received everything for nothing. I am not complaining about these men not meeting their obligations, because they have not been able to do so.

Mr. MAXWELL: That is the point.

The PREMIER: That disposes very effectively of the loose talk we hear every day, both inside and outside this Chamber, that soldier settlers have been badly treated. They have not been badly treated. I will admit that in cases where they were put on bad land and had to leave that land they were badly treated.

Mr. KING: Like Mount Gravatt.

The PREMIER: Like Mount Gravatt, Coominya, and Beerburum. There is no doubt about that. It is not a bit of good attempting to continue these men on farms where they could never make a success of the undertaking. It may have been hard and cruel in cases to force them off such land, but it was the only policy the Government could pursue in their interests. It was not a question of the Government at all. The money advanced by the Government was gone. It was a question that it was not good policy to keep men on farms on which they had no hope of making a success.

Mr. SIZER: It was not their fault that they were placed on those lands.

The PREMIER: That is all right; but what is the good of dealing with those things? I can assure the hon. member that problems cannot be solved by recriminations, and by telling someone that mistakes were made five years ago.

Mr. SIZER: But that carries with it an obligation to the individual on the part of the Government.

[Hon. W. McCormack.]

The PREMIER: In my opinion, one factor which has weakened the very foundations of soldier settlements has been the general desire on the part of the public and the Government to do more than a fair thing for them. As a matter of fact, we undermine the very independence and spirit necessary in the first instance to make them a success.

Mr. ROBERTS: But we are justified in telling you that your Government was responsible for the selection of those settlements.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order!

The PREMIER: If Parliament is only concerned with recriminations and telling us what ought not to have been done, and, if that will gratify the soldiers, that is a very easy way out of the difficulty. But we are not going to do that. We must face the question, and devise methods of meeting the difficulties. The hon. member for Burnett said that he would give the soldiers the freehold of their land.

Mr. CORSEER: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: Does the hon. member believe that will solve the difficulty?

Mr. CORSEER: No; but that is the foundation on which we should start.

The PREMIER: If the freehold were given to them, the cost of the purchase of the settlements must be debited against the settlers.

Mr. CORSEER: We did not suggest that.

The PREMIER: The hon. member and his party did not, but I am going to do so. If we did that and transferred the business to a private bank, and said, "You take the freehold and the indebtedness," the settlements would not last six weeks. No bank in Queensland would finance them. Consequently, there is nothing in the argument that the freeholding of the land will solve the problem. In some instances they have as good as freehold for nothing now, and we paid £5, £6, or £9 an acre for the land. Some of the settlers have paid no interest or redemption. They have paid nothing on the land, and still are unable to make a living. I believe this is the situation to-day: The men who could never succeed under any circumstances have been practically eliminated from the settlement. The men who are left are good, honest, sincere men, who have a desire to make a success of their venture. It is now our duty to go on and help those who are endeavouring to "make a do" of soldier settlement. The problem, of course, is where we have purchased land and had to wipe off land values. The hon. member for Dalby has a soldier settlement in his area. If the hon. member were given that settlement, he would soon show how to make it pay. Is there not something in that? Yet hon. members opposite shed crocodile tears because the soldiers cannot make those settlements pay.

Mr. WARREN: He would not take it at the price the Government paid.

The PREMIER: Don't give him the chance. I do not wish to drag in the hon. member for Dalby, but one of the causes of failure in these settlements is due to the fact that we have not had the right type of man on the blocks.

Mr. ROBERTS: He would not take it loaded with the obligations taken over by the soldiers.

The PREMIER: Don't you give him the chance. The hon. member has taken over other land similarly situated and made a success of it. He has the experience, and I admit he has other advantages not possessed by soldier settlers. Many other men have taken up land and made a success of it where returned soldiers have failed. That again brings us to the fact that one of the main causes of the failure of these settlers, outside of Beerburum and Coominya, has been that we did not have the right material at the outset to settle the land. Take the Northern Burnett. There are a number of settlers there who are apparently doing well. The member for the district says they are doing well, and I am informed from other sources that they are doing fairly well—that settlement is taking place a little slowly, but successfully. If we had put returned soldiers on that area in thousands, does anyone believe that the settlement would have been successful? I contend it would have been a disaster for the Upper Burnett. The men on that area are men of experience—men who put up with anything until they get on their feet. They are men who, instead of wanting a house costing £300 or £400, would put that money into cows and other wealth-producing assets.

Mr. CORSEER: Some of those men are returned soldiers who failed at Beerburum.

The PREMIER: No. We took men who failed at Beerburum and Coominya and sent them up there, and they again failed. I went out of my way to instruct officers to look into the records of those settlers and find out all about them before transferring them to the Burnett. In no time after the transfer many of the farms were again on our hands. That is the most difficult thing to contend with in soldier settlement—the material.

The hon. member for Murrumba mentioned a matter that may appear to need attention, that is, that there is an element of unfairness in this matter of soldier settlement. It is contended that the man who took up a block of land on his own initiative, purchased from someone, and was financed on that land altogether away from soldier settlement, has invariably attempted to meet his obligations, and in a lot of cases has met his obligations. It does seem a little unfair that the groups in settlements should receive concessions that are not given to individuals; but, as the Secretary for Public Lands interjected, we can assume that the man who pays his rent and interest is able to do so. Consequently, because we give somebody who cannot meet his interest a concession, it would be almost foolish to give a similar concession to the man who is able to pay his rent and interest, merely from a desire to be fair to him and put him on the same footing as the other individual. It is like giving drought relief to one man in a drought area and, in order to be fair, giving fodder to another man in a good area. It points this moral—that the better method would have been only to take men who desired to go on the land and allow them to select their location and finance them in that location. It has been proved conclusively that that would have been the better

Hon. W. McCormack.]

method. I do not know of any way in which we can pay back to men interest and redemption that they honestly paid and which they owed to the State simply because we are compelled to give another man a concession in regard to interest and redemption. There is no way of doing it. I have investigated the case. I have met many of these people, and their invariable query to me was, not that they could not pay, but that the loafer on the next farm, who never intended to make a success of it, was given a concession that the good man was not getting. That is unfortunate, but I do not know of any way whereby we can remedy it. I know there are men who are doing well but will not pay their rightful dues. They argue, of course, that somebody else is not paying. Men in the Gympie district who were put on the land there did well. They wanted to get land reserved for settlement, and I asked them, "Do you think the soldiers will make a success of it?" They promptly showed me what they were making at banana-growing, and they were making a great success of it. I promptly asked, "Have you ever paid any interest and redemption?" And they said, "Not a 'bob.'" Yet some of them were making from £700 to £1,000 a year in those good years, and their argument was that they would not pay unless we made the men on the soldiers' settlements pay. They are a very difficult group of people to deal with, and for that reason it is difficult to solve the problem.

I want to say a word or two in regard to the recent deputation, because I regard it as a very serious thing for any group of men to suggest that, if they cannot get what they want, they will overawe Parliament. That is not a very good idea to get abroad. I took great exception to it because, as I said, if that is going to be the method of conducting business in Parliament, then we shall have George street a seething mass of people endeavouring to force us to do the things we do not want to do. I will not permit any group or any section of the people to threaten that, unless the Government or Parliament does a certain thing, they will make a demonstration at Parliament House. If they had attempted that demonstration, they would have found themselves in Boggo Road, and that is the place for any section of people who believe in parliamentary government if they attempt to overawe Parliament by any threat of force.

Mr. ROBERTS: It is time for a change.

The PREMIER: I do not know.

Mr. MAXWELL: His views are changing too.

Mr. WALKER: Anyhow, you are absolutely sound.

The PREMIER: People who believe in parliamentary institutions should be most careful to keep them sacred, because if we once allow that sort of thing to be done, that is the end of parliamentary government and parliamentary institutions. No doubt Mr. McDermott and the men who supported him were blowing off hot air.

Mr. WARREN: There was only one.

The PREMIER: The public do not know that. The unfortunate part is that the newspapers publish this kind of talk, and, on top of the publication, we introduce a Bill giving

[*Hon. W. McCormack.*

certain concessions, and, if they associate the two, other sections of the community are likely to say, "The soldiers can enforce their demands; we will do likewise." I say again that the question of soldier settlements is a most difficult one to deal with, and, if the Opposition want to help the soldiers, let them put forward constructive suggestions; but merely to tell us in season and out of season that the Government blundered five or six years ago in regard to Beerburum and in regard to Coominya—the thing is as obvious as the sun—will not help us to solve this problem. We are likely to have good settlements now if we can give the soldier help without in any way hampering him. Self-help and self-reliance are splendid things, and no one who has any knowledge of the condition of these settlements and therefore knows that the State Government have not imposed any hardships on the settlers can say that they have not been given a fair opportunity in regard to the payment of their obligations. They have not paid. They have been given help in every direction, and I believe that those who remain there to-day will form the nucleus of a body of men who will be able to make successful homes upon the settlements.

Mr. SIZER (*Sandgate*): I listened to the speech of the Premier with much interest. There is no doubt that his conclusions must be more or less agreed with by every hon. member; but he cannot expect that members on this side will allow him to say that we are simply now going about the place and saying that affairs at Beerburum have been muddled by the Government. We pointed that out in 1917, when the position of affairs was perfectly obvious.

The hon. gentleman, later on in his speech, said that we selected men to send them to a hopeless proposition and further continued the burdens upon them.

The PREMIER: Do you think I would do any good by pointing out that members of your party were on the Settlement Committee which selected Beerburum?

Mr. SIZER: I do not intend to devote much of my speech to Beerburum, but one would be failing in his duty if he did not say that members on this side, in season and out of season, pointed out these things, but they were ridiculed by hon. members opposite. It will be remembered that we were called unpatriotic and were said to be exploiting the soldiers, when we pointed out the position. If the position had been reversed and we had been sitting over there, and hon. members opposite had been on this side, would the Premier, if he had been Leader of the Opposition, have sat still and said nothing? I think he would have exploited the position very severely and have made the position very difficult for the Government.

Mr. FERRICKS: You admit that you are exploiting the position.

Mr. SIZER: The Premier would have worked the position for all he was worth, and would not have spared the Government in any degree. He would have taken as much advantage of the position as Mr. Fihelly did on one occasion with regard to a bag of cement.

Mr. ROBERTS interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. SIZER: I agree to a certain extent with the fundamental analysis which the Premier made.

Mr. ROBERTS again interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I would ask the hon. member for East Toowoomba to obey my call to order. I have repeatedly called on him to cease cross-firing; I ask him to take some notice to my call for order.

Mr. SIZER: The Premier took as the basic principle the instability of the men. That undoubtedly applied to a very great extent. The other point was the unsuitability of the land. I maintain that many of these men, who would have made first-class settlers, followed the advice of the Government and went on to poor land. If you spend £1,000,000 on a poor settlement it will not pay, because the land will not be good enough to produce payable crops. Where that was done, obviously a readjustment of affairs carries a moral obligation on the part of the Government to rectify the position. Those men have spent a considerable part of their lives which cannot be compensated for, and they should be considered in this proposal.

Another fact of which I am quite satisfied is that in many cases there has been over-capitalisation as a result of the purchase of a lot of the land. Another established fact is its unsuitability in many cases. Nobody will convince me that that responsibility should be thrown on the settlers. If the officers of the Government recommend certain propositions which at a later date are admitted by the heads of departments to have been hopeless from the start, who is to carry the responsibility? Surely not the settlers? Surely the officers concerned should take their share? If some of them recommended the Coominya and Beerburrum settlements, surely they and the Government should take the responsibility? The officers, who in the last analysis should be competent to give sound advice, evidently did not give sound advice, and the Government in turn got wrong advice.

The PREMIER: They were undertaken on the recommendation of Mr. Rose.

Mr. SIZER: Then that means that the Government and their officers are responsible, and not the soldiers.

The PREMIER: If I were to tell you the system that was adopted, you would have a fit.

Mr. SIZER: Probably so. It is no use indulging in recrimination; but in this chain of circumstances it is unfair to put all the blame on the soldiers. They took up the land in all good faith, and those facts place an obligation on the Government to deal with them fairly in the Bill which it is proposed to introduce.

The Premier made a big point of the fact that some men have not met their redemption payments.

The PREMIER: I made the point that there was no argument that we were treating them harshly.

Mr. SIZER: I have not dealt with that point yet. The hon. gentleman said that they made no effort to meet the payments

he spoke about. I think the reason that is largely that the great majority of them have not been in a position to do so, and, if we made a careful analysis of the situation, we would find that it is only the big majority of the men on bad land—

The PREMIER: The Stanthorpe land is not bad land.

Mr. SIZER: In most cases the cause of failure has been either bad land or the smallness of the areas.

The PREMIER: No; it is a market for their produce.

Mr. SIZER: Does not that prove that it was an unsound form of settlement to go into, and that the financial relief which they are getting is not going to meet the position?

The PREMIER: The trouble at Stanthorpe was the fruit fly, and they are now combating the fruit fly.

Mr. SIZER: Even if we write the settlements down to the very lowest figure, I am doubtful whether they can be made a success. The officers of the department will know better than I; but the weak point is that the majority of the settlers could not be successful because the land was poor. Before the Government go on with this Bill they should have a complete resurvey of the whole position. They are going to have a big loss.

The PREMIER: How are you going to have a resurvey?

Mr. SIZER: In many cases the land is unsuitable. Where it is unsuitable I would not spend another penny. I would take the settlers away and put them somewhere else, and I would compensate them to the best of my ability.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: In other words, you say that they are so little in need of relief that they can wait for another six months?

Mr. SIZER: No. If the Government are going in for palliatives, I would give them six months' sustenance.

The PREMIER: That is one of the things which caused some of the failures.

Mr. SIZER: I wish the hon. gentleman would preach that doctrine in every case, because I think he would then be on sound lines. It is obviously unsound to attempt to continue in areas where the settlements cannot be made a success. Giving the settlers there financial relief is only postponing the evil day. I would have a survey of the whole of the settlements, and where it can be shown that the proposition is hopeless I would transfer them.

The PREMIER: Would you compensate those men?

Mr. SIZER: I would transfer them to good land—and there is good land in Queensland—and adjust things as fairly as possible to recompense them for the energy and the years they have wasted.

[12 noon.]

The PREMIER: Would you transfer a man who had proved himself definitely unsuitable?

Mr. SIZER: No. The hon. gentleman has admitted that they have weeded out the

Mr. Sizer.]

majority of the unsuitable men and that there now remain practically only the suitable men.

The PREMIER: At Beerburum they remain only to live rent free.

Mr. SIZER: Then why not give up the settlement and allow the land to go back to its native state? No good purpose will be served by perpetuating the conditions suggested by the hon. gentleman.

The PREMIER: Do you think they would remain if we gave them the freehold?

Mr. SIZER: It would be just as absurd as providing it for settlement. On the Atherton settlement there are areas of suitable land, but in many cases they are too small. The Government should take into consideration the question of merging three holdings into two, compensating the man deprived of his holding by placing him on a block elsewhere. It would be preferable to have two successful settlers rather than three more or less struggling and depending on assistance from the Government.

The PREMIER: What would you do with the man who allowed his stock to die—really it was Government stock because it had not been paid for—and took stock in on agment?

Mr. SIZER: The hon. gentleman can easily quote extraordinary cases.

The PREMIER: They are not extraordinary cases. About 20 per cent. of the settlers do that.

Mr. SIZER: Then it is infinitely more foolish on the part of the hon. gentleman to tolerate such a position. If the hon. gentleman has been aware of that for any length of time, then this Bill is long overdue.

The Bill is not going to solve the problem either. We should have a commission to ascertain which settlements can be made a success and at what valuation they can be made a success. The commission should be asked to ascertain from practical men in the district at what valuation on similar blocks they can farm and make a success of their holdings, and the difference between that valuation and the present valuation on the soldier settlements should be written off. Until that is done this mere tinkering with the position will not solve the problem.

The PREMIER: Do you know that in most of the cases the valuation would be nil?

Mr. WARREN: Then make it nil.

Mr. SIZER: The Government must face the position.

The PREMIER: You do not think the settler would be taking you down then?

Mr. SIZER: The hon. gentleman is very suspicious, but he does not always act on suspicion. If the valuation of a given farm were assessed at £100, and the Government decided to write down the valuation to £80, and evidence was produced to the entire satisfaction of the Government proving that it could be made productive at a valuation of only £40, then what is the use of continuing the valuation of £80? Why not fix the valuation at £40 and give the man a chance?

The PREMIER: What would you do in the case of ten men on a settlement, two making

a success and the other eight unable to make a living?

Mr. SIZER: You would have to give serious consideration to the personal qualities of the individuals. I do not burke that question, and the Government must face it.

The PREMIER: That is the position on Cecil Plains.

Mr. SIZER: No one could attempt to bolster up such a system. We desire soldier settlements to be placed on a proper basis so that they may be first-class settlements and not be over-capitalised. The Government should cut the loss and allow the settlers to become successful, satisfied, prosperous settlers. We do not wish to see them bolstered up with a high capitalisation, but we are afraid that this Bill will not go far enough. We desire the omission of the words mentioned in the amendment so that we can go into the whole question of the revaluation of soldier settlements.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: In other words, you do not wish to relieve them now.

Mr. SIZER: The interjection of the hon. gentleman is quite beside the question. The fact is—and the Premier has admitted it—that quite a number of soldier settlers are unable to carry on. What is the use of perpetuating a system if the men working under it have no prospect of carrying on? Why not make a complete survey of the whole situation and apply the solution, and, if necessary, say that the first loss shall be the last loss?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: This Bill proposes to give relief that is asked for.

Mr. SIZER: That relief will not go very far. It will not go all the way.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It will be very welcome.

Mr. SIZER: Anything is welcome to the man who is "down and out"; but my point is that it will not solve the problem. Had the matter been dealt with some time ago, I know at least one settlement in the Normanby electorate where the men, who have now gone, would at least have been progressive. This Bill to give relief has come along very late in the day. The Government have waited many years before taking this step, and they could very well delay action for a month or so and make a complete solution of the difficulty. Let us do as we have done with Chillagoe—face the loss and state what it is.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You would not get support for that from one soldier settlement.

Mr. SIZER: We should be prepared to face the situation in the blackest way possible, but in the most practical way, and allow the men who are prepared to continue and who have been successful to do so. I would prefer to do that rather than curry a little favour by giving a little modicum of relief here and there. That policy is only courting failure and leaving men on these settlements instead of allowing them to become useful citizens in other walks of life.

Many of the men at Coominya and Beerburum are not responsible for their failure, for they were sent there. The Government selected the land. The Government placed

[*Mr. Sizer.*]

obligations on them. The settlers went there to work a hopeless proposition. They might as well have been placed in Queen street to find coal, for no matter how they work they could not make a success of that land. The Government selected the land; yet they say that the fault is solely that of the soldier. The Government cannot shirk their responsibility. The responsibility is theirs. Let us deal with the problem, and give the men some prospect whereby they can secure some return for their labour. I ask the Government, if need be, to postpone this Bill, make temporary arrangements for relief—if things are so desperate—and have a complete survey, revaluation, and classification of all soldier settlements. Then close down those settlements where the men have no prospect, and transfer the men who are good settlers to good lands. Let the Government compensate those men for their work, and the State will have an asset; otherwise, if they allow the settlements to continue as they are, they will have no asset at all.

Mr. WEIR (*Maryborough*): It is high time that hon. members opposite faced the question of soldier settlements from a practical point of view and ceased exploiting the settlers thereon. I appreciate the stand taken this morning by the hon. member for Sandgate, and I trust that all members of this Chamber, no matter what their views were regarding the war, will appreciate his stand also, and say, "Here is a chance to argue logically and evolve the best basis for helping soldier settlers." I desire to refer to this unpleasant feature of exploiting the soldier, and I hope that the instance we had the other day will be the last of its kind. I make mention of it in the hope that it will be the last occasion, and in the hope that the soldier himself will see how easy it is to be drawn into a position from which he cannot extract himself, and which may act detrimentally to him. At the conference of soldier settlers the other day, the matters dealt with were practically on all-fours with the matters proposed to be dealt with in this Bill, and there was a definite attempt to exploit the soldier.

Mr. KEER: Nonsense.

Mr. WEIR: I am not giving my own words, but will quote from the "Daily Mail" so that the opinion may be an impartial one. The extract deals with the statement of a Mr. Marshall—

"The Minister refused to see a deputation from Enoggera, and we kicked up a disturbance in the lobby."

I am taking the ordinary common-sense point of view that the lobby referred to must be the lobby of this Parliament House. The extract continues—

"The matter was fixed up for us the next day.

"Mr. Warren: I guarantee I will get you into the House and you can demonstrate there."

What does that mean? If it means anything, it means that a member of this Chamber was prepared to assist those soldiers in making a demonstration in the endeavour to influence the Government. That is not going to get soldier settlers anywhere. I do not want to see any of my relatives going down in the turmoil brought about with the object of advertising certain individuals. I

object to it, and consider that, to put it in the mildest terms, it is not decent. As every hon. member knows, this Bill has been on the stocks for some considerable time—long before that conference took place. The wording of the Bill has nothing to do with that conference.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It was in print before the conference was held.

Mr. WEIR: That is so, and what happened at that conference had no bearing on this Bill, because the Government were determined to introduce the Bill before the conference was held. I agree with the Premier that it is a good Bill, and I do not agree with the hon. member for Burnett that it should be withdrawn. It may be debatable whether the Bill goes far enough, but because it does not go far enough it would be most unfair to withdraw a measure that will be of considerable benefit to many soldier settlers. To adopt such an attitude would get the settlers nowhere, and would be most unfair to many of them.

My remarks apply mostly to the Gordon Brook settlement, because I am most familiar with that. It is in the Nanango district, and from my association with the settlement I am confident that there is no other settlement where the settlers are making greater endeavours to make the best of their job. I am aware that there is a difference of political opinion between myself and a number of those settlers, but I know well that they are endeavouring in every way to make good. Everybody who knows the district knows that for the eight years or so that they have been there those settlers have had only one good season, so that weather conditions have been materially against them.

There are other phases of the soldier settlement question that will also have to be considered. There is one which in its essence may appear to be small, but which relatively is great as it detrimentally affects the men concerned. I refer to the everlasting habit of grass pirating. That operates in the sheep areas, and it also operates in connection with these settlements. A man may forfeit his block because he is unable to meet his obligations or for some other reason. That man goes off the block, and the men next to his block make application for the vacated block. In the meantime shrewd individuals, who are often wealthy men, also butt in and make application for the block. In many cases those individuals are not eligible and are aware that they are not eligible; but they go to the extent of cutting the wires and putting their stock on the property. The stock remain on the property until they practically eat the whole of the feed, while the whole of the resources of the department are considering the matter.

In the first instance it is in the hands of the Agricultural Bank. It takes some time because there are certain forms that have to be gone through. In turn, the Agricultural Bank hands it on to the Lands Department, which takes its time to go through it. I am not complaining about the time, because I do not know that it is unduly long. The point is that it has to go through certain definite stages, and, while going through these definite stages, men who have no right to the land at all are pirating the grass. I know of individual cases—some

Mr. Weir.]

are happening at the present time—and when a man has ultimately got the block of land and gets on to it, it is no earthly use for that season because it is as bare as the floor. In many cases the new settler cannot even induce the person who was not the successful settler to withdraw his stock, and they have to go the length of threatening to get the stock impounded. That is the sort of thing that annoys the settler. There is one way round, and I believe it can be done by the Lands Department if due regard is paid to the rights of men who admittedly have not sufficient land. These men should have priority of claim. The men at Gordon Brook have suffered from the start from the fact that the blocks are not big enough. However, that is not the purpose of Parliament now. It is no use pointing out what happened in the past. The question is, "Can we make it better in the future?" I believe we can, and I believe the department is trying to make it better along the lines I have suggested, but it has not gone as far as it might go. Every block surrendered morally belongs to the soldier settlers who remain. No one outside the settlement has any claim whatever to a surrendered block until every soldier has sufficient to enable him to keep his family in comfort. In many cases the land surrendered has not been allocated to the soldier settlers. There is a belief in the district that the statements made regarding the size of the blocks are not correct. The department insists that 200 acres is quite sufficient. The hon. member for Sandgate raised the same issue that I am raising now. I believe a lot of good work could be done by a local committee. I can quite imagine that the land agent, whoever he may be, with his knowledge of the district, assisted by a soldiers' representative and probably a successful farmer, would make a very good committee to advise the Government as to the effect of local conditions and the areas necessary. That could be done with advantage, and, if it were done, a lot of the hardships at present suffered by the soldiers would be obviated. The more you inquire into the conditions surrounding these settlements the more you think the settlers are worth fighting for. I know one man at Gordon Brook who is an exceptionally hardworking chap, and he has had a very hard battle up to date. I do not think that man is ever in his bed when he can be on his farm doing good solid work, but, if relief is not given within the next few weeks, he will have to go. There ought to be some way round a position like that. As the Premier said, there is no case—I have watched the settlement very carefully—where any undue hardship has been placed on these men in the way of rack-renting. In every case when these men come up with arrears of rent or interest the Government have met them reasonably; but there is still something we can do so that, instead of driving this man off the land, we will keep him on the land because we want him on the land. He has learned now how to work his land. Assuming now, for the sake of argument, that he had not that knowledge in the first instance, he is an eight-years' better asset now than he was then. This is not a unique case.

Several hon. members have spoken on the question of leasehold. I am one of those who are very glad that the Government did not give these men freehold, and I believe

[*Mr. Weir.*

that the returned soldiers are glad of it themselves—those who went on the land with the object of making a living. I believe they prefer leasehold to freehold. The hon. member for Sandgate said that the land is over-capitalised, and the hon. member for Burnett suggested that we should give them freehold. If the land is over-capitalised, and these men's backs are nearly broken in the struggle on leasehold land which is over-capitalised, what chance would they have of making a living on freehold? They would not thank you for freehold.

Mr. NOTT: You could make freehold cheaper than the present leasehold.

Mr. WEIR: Nonsense. I believe that the men who are on Beerburrum to-day would not have gone on freehold land. We have had instances showing that it is impossible for men to go on freehold land and make a living.

There are other phases of soldier settlement which will come under consideration. I urge hon. members, in whatever they have to say about soldiers, to realise the fact that whatever may have happened in the past does not matter. We are sympathetic to soldier settlers. I am not alluding to these settlers merely from the point of view that they are returned soldiers—they have no more rights or disabilities than any other hard-working settler—the Australian who remained here during the war has just as many rights as the Australian who was on the other side—I am not log-rolling in that sense. I urge hon. members to direct their energies towards making the conditions better, and not to do anything which would lead the Minister to withdraw the Bill, which I think would be a tragedy.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowong*): The discussion has done a great deal of good, and I congratulate the hon. member for Murrumbidgee on moving the amendment. Even the hon. member who has just resumed his seat has stated that the Government or the department have not gone as far as they might have done in connection with the returned soldiers.

Mr. WEIR: I did not say that.

Mr. MAXWELL: The Premier said the soldier settlers have not been badly treated. In my opinion, the statement which the hon. gentleman made shows most conclusively that these men have been badly treated, and I will prove it from the admission which the hon. gentleman himself has made. He said that mistakes have been made in connection with these settlements, and under the conditions, had he been a member of the committee, he might have done the same. The point I want to stress is that another declaration of error has been made by the Premier. The hon. member for Murrumbidgee, by moving the amendment, has given an opportunity to the Minister to open up the whole question. I believe the Minister does not want to perpetuate this mistake.

Attention has been drawn on numerous occasions to the condition of a number of the men on these settlements. These men did not live in poverty on the settlements and work hard to keep their wives and children because they thought they were in the right place. They did it because a mistake had been made by those who selected

the land for them. It was impossible for them to get a living on the land selected.

Statements have been made as to the inefficiency of some of the soldier settlers who went on the land. We find that a number of men left Beerburrum owing to the unsuitability of the land and went to the Calico Creek settlement, and practically every man made a success of banana-growing there. The land at Calico Creek was good, and that afforded them an opportunity to make a success of it; but the land at Beerburrum was too poor. As hon. members know, it had previously been set apart as an artillery ground by the Federal authorities. It was absolutely unsuitable for settlement, and I hope that the Minister will take this opportunity and reopen the whole question.

The Premier has asked for some constructive suggestion. I am glad that he has said what he has on this question. He has been quite open in his statements as to the cause of a great deal of the trouble, and the hon. member for Sandgate has made one of the constructive suggestions the hon. gentleman asked for. Do not tinker with it! Let a Commission be appointed to go into the whole matter, and let us cut the loss straight away, as the Premier has said the Government are going to do with State enterprises. We have the Premier's admission that errors have been made. Why perpetuate them? To me it is absolute murder to keep these men on settlements where they cannot make a living. The hon. gentleman himself knows that the Bill offers them only temporary assistance. I appreciate the temporary assistance which is being given, but in the meantime why not take them away to the Dawson Valley or the Mary Valley? Are they not worthy of it? I remember a statement made some time ago by the Premier that the opportunity would be given to a number of these returned men to settle in the Dawson Valley. That has not been done, to the best of my knowledge and belief, but I have a certain amount of faith in the Minister. I believe he is anxious to "do his bit."

Mr. WEIR interjected.

Mr. MAXWELL: I have no time for this revolutionary stuff. It gets a man nowhere. It is no good saying that, if we cannot get what we want, we are going to pull down the whole edifice. We have reached an acute stage, and it is necessary that something should be done to relieve these men, women, and children. In view of the information which the Premier has conveyed to us this morning, we should not keep these men on Beerburrum a day longer than we can possibly help. In the meantime, as has been suggested by other hon. members on this side, give them temporary assistance.

I hope the Minister will accept the amendment, and let us open up the whole question, instead of doing the thing piecemeal. We shall then know where we stand. At the present time the conditions spell ruin, and unless something is done it will be worse. Many men have lost their all. The Premier himself pointed out that some of them had such faith in the settlement that they put their gratuities into it. All that has gone with the work of years because of the mistake of somebody who chose land which was absolutely unsuitable for land settlement, and put these men there to get a living for

themselves and their wives and families. I say that the "diggers" have been badly treated, and the time has arrived when something should be done to relieve the situation.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*): If this is a Bill merely to ratify something which has already been done, it is not going to relieve the situation very much, and for that reason I support the amendment to enable further relief to be given. I emphatically say that what has been done already in regard to soldier settlement is by no means sufficient. It is nowhere near what we expect from the Government or what is needed.

[12.30 p.m.]

This is not a question of securing votes. Recently a number of soldier settlers at their own expense attended a conference in Brisbane and passed a number of resolutions embodying very desirable and essential requirements in soldier settlements in Queensland. This Bill now gives an opportunity to the Minister to give effect to those resolutions; but, if it is a Bill only to ratify something already done, then the representations of the soldier settlers by way of a deputation are not receiving any consideration from the Government.

Mr. ROBERTS: The Minister stated that the Bill was framed before he received the deputation.

Mr. KERR: That should not prevent the hon. gentleman from widening the scope of the Bill and permitting us to make amendments to meet the present situation.

Mr. COLLINS: For God's sake make some suggestion!

Mr. KERR: I suggest to the Minister that he should widen the scope of the Bill. He will then obtain all the suggestions he wants.

Mr. COLLINS: Make some suggestions now.

Mr. KERR: If the Bill is to amend legislation "in a certain particular" only, what opportunity have we of making suggestions? The soldier settlers are asking for certain rights—not concessions—and, if the views they expressed at the recent conference are not to receive consideration, then there is a bad look-out. Now we have an opportunity of doing something. We have moved the amendment with the object of dealing with the policy of treating cases on their merits. So long as the Government continue the policy of dealing with cases on their individual merits, so long will there be trouble on the settlements. It is one of the worst policies which could be adopted where there are thousands of men concerned. If the Government wish to give relief to the settlers, the relief must be extended in a general way, and more liberal treatment must be extended by the State Advances Corporation.

Mr. WEIR: Whether they need it or not?

Mr. C. J. RYAN: You do not believe in the human touch in administration?

Mr. KERR: If the Government proceed to deal with cases here and there, then they are only looking for trouble. The best policy in connection with group settlement, especially where every settler launched out on the same basis, is to give every man the same concession. As a result of the policy of dealing with cases on their merits, we have in the majority of cases the "wasters"

Mr. Kerr.]

bringing up their cases, having them dealt with allegedly on their merits, and in nine cases out of ten obtaining concessions.

Mr. WEIR: Every man who obtains a concession is a "waster"? That is a miserable remark.

Mr. KERR: Let me prove my statement. Many settlers have paid their interest, whilst other settlers who could afford to pay it did not do so. The result was that those who would not pay have obtained a concession.

Mr. WEIR: You said that only the "wasters" received concessions.

Mr. KERR: I did not say anything of the kind. The hon. gentleman cannot put words into my mouth.

Mr. WEIR: You wait until you see it in "Hansard."

Mr. KERR: The hon. gentleman knows that I did not mean that at all. He ought to know it. Because he has a brother on a group settlement he thinks he knows all about them.

Mr. WEIR: I am not going to permit the hon. member to say what he likes about soldier settlers.

Mr. KERR: I am not saying anything about the hon. gentleman's brother. I am speaking to the hon. gentleman.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! This cross-firing must cease. The hon. gentleman must address the Chair.

Mr. WEIR: A dirty insult on his part!

Mr. KERR: The hon. member for Maryborough referred in scathing terms to one soldier settler, Mr. Marshall.

Mr. WARREN: A real good fellow.

Mr. KERR: I desire to take this opportunity of refuting the inference conveyed by the hon. member. Mr. Marshall is one of the very best settlers that Queensland has. He is a splendid type of man, giving 100 per cent. of his time to a settlement in my electorate, and making a success of it. He has taken a very keen interest in matters affecting the local local producers' association. He is one of the steadiest and straightest men that has ever been placed on a group settlement.

The hon. member for Maryborough referred to the deputation waiting in the lobby, but I desire to put him right on that subject. For quite a long time an ex-Secretary for Public Lands declined to meet this deputation, and the returned men concerned went up into the lobby of the office of the Chief Secretary. They were told that the Minister would not see them. When they knew that their troubles were not receiving and would not receive the attention due to them they became rather fidgety. As member for the district, I was responsible for asking the Minister to see this deputation. When I told them that the Minister was not ready to see them they became fidgety, and, as a result, the Minister consented to see one of their number—a Mr. Adams. If the whole concessions they asked for were not granted, a good deal was done to meet their requests. That was the whole incident referred to by Mr. Marshall. The lobby of this Chamber was not referred to. The hon. member for Maryborough was, therefore, unfortunate in picking on Mr. Marshall.

[*Mr. Kerr.*

I do not want to enter upon a second reading speech, but the time has arrived when the soldier settlers should receive greater consideration and be placed on a business basis. Reviewing cases here and there will not rectify the present position. The relief that is necessary is far greater than is intended under this Bill. We shall have to value each block on what it will return the selector. It is only camouflaging the position to appoint a board of officers to visit each settlement at a cost of thousands of pounds to go into the cost of the improvements in 1920, compare them with the cost to-day, and wipe off the balance. The Government have caused a lot of trouble in this manner. A new settler—not a returned man—has been placed on an abandoned block at half the price at which the farms of the men who have stuck it out are capitalised to-day. That is something quite wrong.

Mr. HARTLEY: We do not do that.

Mr. KERR: The Government are doing that.

Mr. HARTLEY: If returned men apply for abandoned blocks, they get preference.

Mr. KERR: I know of a case where a block in a soldier settlement was abandoned by a soldier and the liability was taken over by some other person. A little while after this man also left the block, and the original selector returned to the settlement and took up his old block at half the capital price it was valued at when he left it. Had he remained there, the capitalised price would have been double what it is to-day. The administration in regard to these matters has been shocking. The settler who gives trouble is the person to whom concessions are made, but, if I were asked for advice, I would tell the settlers to-day, "Don't pay your interest until you are all treated alike."

Mr. HARTLEY: You think, then, that we ought to withdraw the Bill?

Mr. KERR: The object of the Bill is only to ratify something which has been done.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You do not know anything about the Bill.

Mr. KERR: The Minister said the Bill was prepared before the soldiers' conference eventuated. The men were so disgusted with the existing state of affairs that they called a conference consisting of representatives from all over Queensland, in the endeavour to secure better conditions from the Government. Strangely enough, we now have this Bill before us. Now is the time, before we go into our six months' recess, to give these men what they are entitled to. Even the Commonwealth Concessions Bill was not handled as it should have been handled, and at a later occasion I shall speak on that point. The Government should place the interest and capitalisation of these holdings on a decent basis for every individual soldier settler. In the cases where men have met their interest, that interest should be deducted from the capital. The Government should not make fish of one and fowl of another. We want a Bill that will definitely set out a completely new procedure, not merely ratify mistakes of the past. Something more than temporary relief is needed. As the hon. member for Nundah said, the first loss is the greatest loss, and it is time the Government woke up, considered the claims that have been put forward by

our returned soldier settlers, and placed matters on a decent footing.

Mr. KELSO (*Nundah*): I approach this question in the light of the experience I have had in connection with the soldier settlement at Highlands in my electorate. I recognise that during the last three years the Government have been merely tinkering with the question.

A half-hearted attempt has been made by the Government to deal with this matter. When the matter was under the jurisdiction of the Department of Public Lands they endeavoured to make some sort of a revaluation. The thing was so outrageous so far as the debit against each block was concerned that the Government did make some slight concession. They wrote off some slight amount of interest and reduced the capital in many cases by such a small amount as to make the thing farcical. It was an insult to the soldier settlers, and certainly it was no revaluation. It was left to one gentleman to go out and revalue. Settlers in the Highlands soldier settlement will tell you that that gentleman did not go out and examine the conditions of each farm, and that he did not look at each house. He had certain information, assumed that there was a certain amount of depreciation, and from one or two spots he made his valuation, instead of going round the whole district.

Mr. PEASE: How do councils make their valuations?

Mr. KELSO: I do not care how they make their valuations. When I make a valuation I go personally to inspect each place so that I can verify everything that I place in my report. The settlers in the Highlands soldier settlement have been very dissatisfied. In the first place they did not receive the proper type of land, consequently the whole thing was a tragedy. I do not blame hon. members opposite only, as both sides of the House were represented on the committee.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Did not some civilians offer to take over blocks on the Highlands soldier settlement?

Mr. KELSO: I will deal with that matter directly. Anybody who went out to the Highlands soldier settlement and saw the land could not understand how any man in his right senses could recommend the Highlands lands as a place on which to put soldiers. The land is absolutely "rotten," so to speak. It will hardly feed a bandicoot. At any rate, these men have put up a good fight, and, as the Premier said, the men who are there now are men who are likely to stick. What we want at the present time is not to go into ancient history, but to see what we can do to rectify the mistakes of the past. These men made repeated applications to the department when the Premier was Secretary for Public Lands, and that hon. gentleman has a complete grasp of the situation. I introduced a deputation from the Highlands soldier settlement to the hon. member when he was Secretary for Public Lands and the whole question was put before him. He was told that there were certain men in the settlement who, for reasons of their own, were prepared to hang on. They had got used to the settlement, their families were growing up, and they did not want to change. There were others who wanted to get out, but the department had no legislative power at that time to allow a man to

leave a settlement and put him on another block of land and divide that land amongst the settlers who were left. Many of them wanted to go to the Mary Valley, where their mates had made a success of it. To ask a man to be a dairy farmer on land at the Highlands and give him 40 acres was an absolutely silly thing. One man has Mount Nebo at his back, and included in his 40 acres is a precipice which a goat could not climb up. He was expected to use that as a dairy farm. Some of these men said, "If you give us 60 or 70 or 80 acres, we will try and 'make a do' of it"; but they are not prepared to continue with the heavy capital debt that is on the land. They cannot possibly do it. What the Premier has said is quite right—a large number of them absolutely refuse to pay anything. As a matter of fact, a great proportion of them have no money to pay anything. How are we going to remedy this situation, which has been hanging fire for the last three years? If the department is going to do it in a businesslike way and wants recommendations from the Opposition, from what I know of the soldier settlements, I should say that each individual case should be taken on its merits. The great mistake in connection with soldier settlement was the idea that to make the settlers contented and prosperous was to herd them in a settlement. That is a socialistic idea which must always break down. If you had taken these men, who knew nothing at all about agriculture, and allowed them to pick the locality in which they wanted to settle and had given them decent land at the start, they would have had a better chance. Where the mistake was made was in selecting the Highlands, Beerburum, Coominya, and other settlements where the land was not first-class. When you placed a number of men on land that was unsuitable, the thing was foredoomed to failure at the start, whereas, if these soldiers had been spread over Queensland, while there might have been some failures, it would not have been such a great failure as that with which we are faced at the present time.

The Federal Government have an interest in this matter, having contributed a very large amount of money. They have certain responsibilities to the soldiers. They asked the soldiers to go away to fight for Australia, and they said, "When you come back we will see that you are properly attended to and ere given a chance to make good afterwards."

I entirely disagree with the statement of the hon. member for Maryborough, who said that no soldier in Australia had any greater claim on the community than a civilian had. When these men went away they were told that, if they came back, "nothing would be too good for them." Mr. Fisher, in trying to get them to go, said that Australia would stand by them "to the last man and to the last shilling." They were promised that everything possible would be done for them. Has that promise been carried out? No matter what it costs the Commonwealth or the State, we must redeem the promises made to the soldiers. We have to see that they are properly settled on the land. The soldier settlements have been in a state of flux for the last few years. The soldiers have not been able to meet their interest payments. Some of them may be able to do it; but they say they are not going to pay if others do

Mr. Kelso.]

not pay. I do not think it was a good policy to transfer the control of the indebtedness from the Secretary for Public Lands to the Agricultural Bank. The soldier settlements should be under the direct control of the Minister, who will then be in a position to deal with each individual case. What ought to be done is to make a fresh valuation of each individual property—not a valuation in globo—to find out the position each settler is in, and, if possible, meet his wishes. The Minister would find that there are men on the Highlands settlement who would be glad to get away, and this would enable those who want to stay there to get larger areas of land. We have had enough experience in these matters not to make the same mistake a second time. The men would go to other places feeling that with the experience they had gained they would be able to make a success of the venture. We want the whole question of soldier settlement dealt with. We want the soldier settlers to be satisfied; and the only way to achieve that desire is to deal with each individual case on its merits. One of the things which the Government ought to do is to revalue every settlement and write down the values to the market price. Unless that is done, we shall not get the men to work with any heart. They feel at present that they are being asked to work off a “dead horse.” If a man cannot “make a go,” what will happen? I know of one case on the Highlands soldier settlement where a man got disgusted and left the settlement. He went away and took up something outside as a civilian. If he had been successful, the Government would have come down on him for the amount due by him in connection with the settlement he had abandoned.

Mr. MORGAN: That is the unfortunate part of it.

Mr. KELSO: The liability which arises under the contract he has entered into attaches to a man for twenty years. If a returned soldier decides for good reasons of his own to leave a settlement and take his chance outside, instead of asking the Government to assist him any further, the liabilities which he entered into at first should be cancelled. I hope the Government will take up my suggestion that there should be a revaluation of the soldier settlements. Let me point out what the department has to face at the present time. If a man abandons a selection with a house upon it, the department has to sell that house off the land, with the result that in some cases a house which cost £350 only brings the department about £75. Rather than have the selector take the extreme step of leaving his selection, would it not be far better for the department to take a broad view of the whole situation and write the valuation down generously to induce him to stay upon it?

Mr. C. J. RYAN: Why not apply that to every business?

Mr. KELSO: We are dealing with a special set of people in a special set of circumstances. If the hon. member is like the hon. member for Maryborough and thinks the soldiers should not get any better treatment than civilians, I can understand the interjection; but I am not built that way, and I do not think any other hon. member of the Opposition is. I have already said that a great duty devolves on the people of Australia, and that is recognised by the

[*Mr. Kelso.*

Federal Government. It should be recognised also by this Government. If they wish to recognise it, they should treat the soldiers in an extremely generous way. They are not treating them in that way now.

Mr. HARTLEY: They are.

Mr. KELSO: If the hon. member says that they are, he does not understand the subject.

Mr. HARTLEY: You do not understand the subject.

Mr. KELSO: I understand the subject, at any rate, as well as the hon. member. I have already said that I have a soldier settlement in my electorate, and I know the troubles of the selectors there, and I say it would be far better for the Government to write down the values of the assets rather than allow the men there to forfeit their selections, with the result that the department has to sell the houses off the land. Any financial institution would take the view that it is better to nurse these men, to encourage them to hang on to the settlement and “make a do” of it rather than let them leave the settlement and sell the houses at a fraction of their cost.

The whole subject is a big one, and I hope the Government will tackle it in a big way. These men have genuine grievances. I do not for one moment agree with men coming here and making threats; but they have genuine grievances, and they have held themselves in check for some time because they believed the Government were sympathetic. Let the Government rise to the occasion, go over the whole ground, and see that each individual case is attended to, and, if possible, make each selector so satisfied that the question will not have to be revived again. I feel perfectly satisfied that, if the Government tackle it from the individual point of view, they will have a far better chance of solving this great problem and remedying the injustices which exist. I am not saying that they are altogether to blame. The injustices arose to a great degree because the whole thing was wrong at the start—I refer to the idea of turning them into one community in districts where many of them could not possibly be successful. Now we have got down to common ground and know exactly the position, and, if the Government rise to the occasion, they can meet the legitimate wishes of the settlers and make them contented.

Mr. COLLINS (*Bowen*): I desire to have something to say on this debate, which has occupied about three hours, taken up principally by members of the Opposition trying to some extent to prevent the Minister from doing something for the returned [2 p.m.] soldier settlers. I have no soldier settlements in my electorate, and I am very pleased that I have not, because I was never an advocate of soldier settlement. What I have in my electorate is settlement of soldiers, and I am very pleased to be able to rise in my place in this Chamber and state that I have not had a single complaint from any of them. Why? I take it that these men who went to the war and practically faced the cannon's mouth, who were considered heroes and so forth, are not degenerates. They are men of the world, and they are fighting the battle of life the same as they fought the battle on the war front.

Judging from some of the remarks of hon. members opposite this morning, I am inclined to think they are overdoing this word "soldier." Personally, I think the time has arrived when we should amend all this legislation by dropping the word "soldier." The war ceased in 1918, and why should we continue talking of men as soldiers when they are no longer soldiers, but are really citizens of the State of Queensland or the Commonwealth, and we should recognise them as such? I am surprised at the remarks of some members of the Opposition in practically saying that we should wipe out the charge in connection with interest and write down the valuations of soldier settlements—in fact, practically trying to teach the settlers already on the settlements what we have been accused of from time to time—repudiation. These men do not or should not wish to repudiate their just liabilities. There is not a settler in my electorate, so far as I know, who desires to repudiate his liability, and why should these men be taught this doctrine of repudiation? I would like to know why we have this discussion about the land at Beerburrum being poor. When these soldiers were fighting the battles of the Empire they were all considered to be heroes. What has become of the people who used to tell us that "nothing was too good for the returned soldier"?

Mr. MAXWELL: You are not one of them.

Mr. COLLINS: I have done more for the Empire than the hon. member for Toowong. I lost my only boy at the war—if he wants to know. I have done more than he has; but that is by the way. What has become of these people who told us that the soldiers were all heroes, that they were fighting for the defence of the Empire, and that they should want for nothing? What has become of all the large landholders for whom they fought? Why did we have to place these settlers on the poor land which members of the Opposition say exists at Beerburrum?

Mr. MAXWELL: You were not compelled to put them there.

Mr. COLLINS: Where in the Commonwealth are the 12,187 owners of unimproved land of a value exceeding £5,000 and an aggregate value of £179,668,830? Why could they not give some of their land for the settlement of returned soldiers? Yet we hear the cry to-day that we, as a State Labour Government, are not doing sufficient for the returned soldiers! What is the Commonwealth Government doing?

Mr. MAXWELL: Everything.

Mr. COLLINS: The Commonwealth Government has been remitting taxation amounting to millions of pounds to the wealthy classes of the Commonwealth. These millions of pounds could have been utilised for the settlement of the soldiers upon the land. Hon. members opposite are barking up the wrong tree. They should bark at the greater Parliament—the Commonwealth Parliament—not at the lesser State Parliament.

The problem of returned soldiers is a Commonwealth responsibility. The State Government made the mistake of taking upon themselves a responsibility which was really a function of the Commonwealth Government. We have already lost hundreds of thousands of pounds on these soldier

settlements, yet we do not seem to be able to find a solution to the problem. It is a difficult problem indeed. The people who called the soldiers heroes have neglected their duty to these heroes, just as they have neglected their duty in Britain to the heroes there. I have seen where £400,000,000 have been lost in Great Britain in fighting the heroes who work in the coal mines, and who practically saved the Empire in the great war.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. COLLINS: And just as the capitalist class have lost £400,000,000 in fighting those heroes in Britain, so would they fight the heroes to-morrow in Australia if the occasion arose.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order!

Mr. COLLINS: I admit I may have been wandering a little. When the war finished, Australia lacked statesmen. She had no statesmen. There were a lot of people in the Commonwealth Parliament who were willing to drift with the times. If the Commonwealth Government had then realised their responsibility, they would have launched out on three big schemes—namely, roads, railways, and irrigation—and not worried so much about putting the soldiers who were returning on the land. If these three schemes had been proceeded with, in the course of time those men who were suited for the land would have settled on the land. We shall have to make the best of the position in Queensland, and the position will have to be faced. The Minister is attempting to face that position, but hon. members opposite have moved an amendment on the motion for the introduction of this Bill for the purpose of omitting certain words in order that they can have a full discussion upon it and endeavour to amend it in any direction they may think fit. I want to tell them that they are not the Government of Queensland, nor are they likely to be for the next generation.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Hear, hear!

Mr. COLLINS: We are the Government, and we are endeavouring to do something to alleviate the position as we find it.

Mr. MAXWELL: You don't govern.

Mr. COLLINS: We do. Let our friends on the benches opposite concentrate their efforts upon the greater Parliament, and compel them to play their part in connection with those people who have defended the Empire, and at the same time let the landowners of Australia assume their responsibility towards returned soldiers. Once more I want to emphasise the point that the Minister at some future date should take into consideration the question of amending certain Acts of Parliament with a view to omitting the word "soldier" and substituting the word "citizen." They are no longer soldiers, but citizens of the Commonwealth and Queensland.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. EDWARDS (*Nanango*): I quite agree with hon. members on this side of the House that at least the party question should be dropped while we are dealing with this measure. In my opinion there was no occasion for such a speech as was just delivered by the hon. member for Bowen.

Mr. Edwards.]

Mr. COLLINS: There was every occasion for it.

Mr. EDWARDS: Such people as the hon. member for Bowen work themselves into a fury on a question like this, which needs calm consideration and the deepest thought by every hon. member in this Chamber, in addition to procuring the best information available on the subject.

Mr. FERRICKS: What about those people who talked themselves into a frenzy during the war in the endeavour to encourage others to go?

Mr. EDWARDS: That very bitterness has caused the conditions that exist on our soldier settlements to-day. Had there not been that bitterness, things would have been very much better than they are. At present I cannot say just what the Bill intends to do, but, if it is going to relieve the difficult position of our returned soldier settlers, I am satisfied that it will be welcomed by, and will receive the support of, every hon. member on this side of the Chamber, and of every hon. member representing soldier settlements.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The welcome to-day seems rather long delayed.

Mr. EDWARDS: That is the very interjection I wanted the Minister to make. The Bill itself is long delayed. For years past I and many other hon. members on this side have been telling the Minister and his predecessor, the present Premier, of the difficulties and trials to which these soldier settlers are subjected, and the way to overcome those difficulties. The very suggestion that was made years ago by this party was made by hon. members opposite this morning—that a board should be appointed to go into this matter, consisting of one practical farmer, one soldier settler, and one officer of the Department of Public Lands. Had the Government adopted that policy previously, they would not now be suffering the very considerable losses which have been sustained through mismanagement of the soldier settlements. Scores of times I and other hon. members on this side have advanced the argument that the areas of many of our soldier settlement blocks are too small. Many of those settlements were not suitable for close settlement. In the circumstances it did not matter whether those who went on the land were returned soldiers or sound practical farmers; they could not have made what might be termed a decent living on those blocks, and could not have developed them as they should be developed.

Mr. COLLINS: There are no complaints from soldiers in my electorate.

Mr. EDWARDS: No? I know that the hon. member was not allowed to speak at some centres in his electorate during the recent general election.

Mr. COLLINS (*Bowen*): I rise to a point of order. The hon. member for Nanango stated that during the last general election I was not allowed to speak at some of the centres in my electorate. I wish to give that an emphatic denial, and I ask the hon. member to produce his proof.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. EDWARDS: The question is, as I have said, a big one. We should endeavour to view as it broadly as we can. The people

[*Mr. Edwards.*

who have suffered are undoubtedly the men who are trying to make a success in the position in which they find themselves. I am quite satisfied that even without an alteration of the Act some of the difficulties could have been eliminated if the Administration had a better knowledge of the conditions. In the first place, I realise that the Minister will never gain the confidence of these people, nor will he help them to make a success unless he lays down a definite policy of what he is prepared to do and says how far he is prepared to go. It is all very fine for the men to be working in the dark and knowing, when they want to do something—such as to transfer their land or get certain concessions in regard to their rents—that each case will be dealt with on its merits. That is where a great many of the difficulties have arisen in connection with soldier settlements. A board was appointed some time ago to inquire into soldier settlements in Queensland, and that board was asked to take into consideration the question of what amount should be written off in the valuation of improvements, and in some cases the valuations were cut down so that the settlers saved £2 or £3 a year. Anyone who knows anything of the circumstances will appreciate that a saving of £2 or £3 a week would be all right; but, when it comes to saving £2 or £3 a year, it is useless. That is the position in which the soldier has found himself right through the piece. In the first place, the land on which they were settled admittedly was unsuitable for closer settlement purposes. Now the Premier gets up and tells us that it is no information to the Government to be told that these settlements have been a failure. The hon. member for Stanley and myself went over the Coominya settlement from home to home in the early stages of the settlement, and we came back into this House and put the case exactly as it appeared to us as men with practical experience. We also told the Secretary for Public Lands that the whole settlement must be a failure. What was done? The whole position was allowed to drift until the whole of that money was lost. These men put in years of work, and then they gradually drifted away from the settlement. The same thing has happened at other settlements that I could mention. Time after time we have shown the necessity for making the areas in many of the districts greater than they are. The hon. member for Maryborough instanced a settlement where his brother, who is a returned soldier, has taken up land. It has been stated scores of times that the areas possessed by these settlers are too small. If practical knowledge had been obtained from men in the district and that knowledge followed out, the soldiers would never have been placed on those areas under such conditions. Some of them require from 5,000 to 10,000 acres in order to make a living; yet they are asked to make a living on 600 or 700 acres. The great danger, even to the men who are left on the different settlements at the present time, is in not doing things at once.

If the areas are too small, we should not let conditions drift on year after year until the bone, as it were, is picked so clean that the settler does not care whether he is given a larger area or not, because the difficulties have become so great that it is impossible for him to overcome them. It must be clear

to everyone that the first kick-off, whether in the West or anywhere else, means either success or failure for many years to come. That is what the soldier settlers have been up against right through the piece. I hope the Minister will lay down conditions in this measure exactly setting out how far he is prepared to go. After the bad seasons which the soldier settlers have gone through with others and the poor class of land they have been put on, the conditions should be made very lenient. It would be a thousand times better to give the settler, whether he be a soldier or a civilian, the land for nothing, than to extract the last penny from him in taxation and make him poor for years to come. If we give him good conditions from the beginning, he will immediately become a taxpayer of the State. It is very important that we make the conditions such that settlers can get on a good footing right from the start.

I might say a few words in regard to the unfair manner in which the returned soldiers have been dealt with in regard to the remission of rates and other concessions. The Premier used the argument this morning that it would not be just if we did not enforce the rental conditions on the people who could pay. Other hon. members opposite also used the argument that members on this side were suggesting that those who could not pay should be forced to do so. The method of revaluation which has been adopted in regard to enforcing rental conditions has been entirely wrong. We know that these men with their families have been working night and day to meet their obligations, and soldiers, just the same as civilians, would not suggest that their rents should be remitted if they could possibly avoid doing so, as they make every effort to pay the rent. Cases have come to my knowledge of soldier settlers who have allowed their land to get into such a state that the improvements were not worth much, and it usually followed that the board allowed such men to get out of paying their rent and other dues, while men just over the fence, who had worked hard and made good and had valuable improvements to show, had to pay their rent. These are the very men who have been doing something in the interests of the State, because no man can improve his land unless he buys through many channels, using the railways, for instance, and becoming a taxpayer in many indirect ways; yet the man who has worked solidly with his family to make good and meet the whole of his obligations finds in the end that the strict letter of the law is enforced upon him and he has to pay up to the last penny. There again is proof of the necessity that men of practical experience with knowledge of the districts in which these settlements are should be consulted.

The State Government have received an enormous amount of money from the Commonwealth Government, but, with all due respect to what has been said on the other side, they have not carried out their obligations, first to the settlers, secondly to the State of Queensland, and thirdly to the Commonwealth of Australia, because there is no doubt that when this money was allotted to Queensland the big responsibility was cast upon them of seeing that it was spent with benefit to the settler and to the State as well as to the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Government have agreed to write off no less than £475,000 of the Queens-

land indebtedness, and that fact at least should make the Minister put forward every possible endeavour to remedy the state of affairs which exists. We realise that in the past the settlements have been a failure. Some of them are still in existence, and everything that the Government can do should be done to see that fair conditions are given to the settlers on them. I say again that the land should be given to them entirely free.

Mr. DASH: The same old thing.

Mr. EDWARDS: The hon. member can treat it as a joke if he likes.

Mr. HANLON: It is hard to treat it at anything but a joke.

Mr. EDWARDS: It is certain that the hon. member is not likely to be of any value on this subject.

Mr. HANLON: Of a good deal more value than you are.

Mr. EDWARDS: I am not going to worry about that. I realise that the Secretary for Public Lands has a very big responsibility to discharge. The position at present is plain proof that something definite must be done. I know that settlers are leaving settlements in my own district largely because they have been crushed out with their stock dying during a dry time; but, if the suggestions which have come from this side of the Chamber from time to time in regard to increased areas had been carried out, they would have been able to feed their stock instead of losing them. As a State we are losing those settlers.

[2.30 p.m.]

Mr. PETERSON (*Normanby*): Having returned soldier settlements in my electorate, naturally I am anxious to know the outstanding features of the proposed Bill, and I listened patiently all the morning trying to glean some information as to the value of the proposed Bill to report to my constituents concerned.

The PREMIER: All the speeches have been delivered without any knowledge whatever of the Bill.

Mr. PETERSON: When the Premier rose to speak he deprecated anybody referring to past events in connection with soldier settlements, but he immediately occupied twenty-five minutes of his time in pointing to the faults of the past.

The PREMIER: I traced the history of soldier settlements.

Mr. PETERSON: I certainly welcome any measure brought forward by the Government to assist the soldiers who have stood valiantly by their selections during the last five years.

The PREMIER: Tracing the history of a problem is very different from abusing somebody because something happens.

Mr. PETERSON: I may find it necessary to do a little tracing, and I hope the hon. gentleman will not object to my following his example.

The PREMIER: You were over here helping us when soldier settlements were formulated.

Mr. PETERSON: Yes. Soldier settlements were instituted in Queensland, not for the purpose of ruining the soldiers, but with the best of intentions. Whether it be in Queensland, New South Wales, or any

Mr. Peterson.]

other part of Australia, all Governments have their troubles in connection with soldier settlements. What concerns me is, not so much the failures in other States, or even the failures in this State, but how we can make good in the future. I am not concerned with what has occurred in the past. What the settlers are asking for is something for the future, and I hope the Bill will give them some hope for the future. The greatest essential of a nation is to try to keep its people on the land, and these men who have taken up these selections, blazed the track, felled the scrub, and worked through excruciating summers are deserving of the most sincere sympathy of this Chamber. If the Government intend by the measure to extend them some practical assistance, then I intend heartily to commend and support it. What are the reasons which have led to the disasters in connection with soldier settlements? We must be fair and say that the settlers took up their blocks when land was at peak prices, and when timber, material, and everything they desired were realising the highest possible prices. The result was that after the war ceased prices slumped and the valuation of their property slumped, too. We must remember that, if they had enjoyed rain over a number of years, we would not have heard so much about the difficulties of soldier settlements. We must remember that they have experienced dry conditions, which meant no return for years of labour. Those conditions in many cases have made the men dissatisfied and placed them in the position of being unable to meet their commitments. They have been unable to meet their commitments mainly because of the high prices paid in the first instance, and because they were unable to find a market for their produce. All the circumstances point conclusively to the opinion that they should be assisted in their present troubles. I think it was the Premier who stated that a weeding-out process had automatically taken place, and there were now on the blocks only those who were fitted to carry out the work. In my district there are soldier selectors who are very fit indeed. They are men who have stood valiantly to their selections during the past six or seven years, but they have been crushed down by the accumulating interest debt on their holdings. The Minister has deferred the payment of interest from year to year, but the amount is growing larger and larger, and the seasons seem to be getting drier and drier, with the result that the settlers find themselves in a greater financial hole than ever in trying to meet their commitments.

I can give hon. members an illustration of one selector in my district to show one of the hardships which have been the cause of many selectors being forced off their land. Every man who has gone off the land was not unfit to be a selector. The unfortunate part of it was that the grocers' bills and other obligations had to be met, irrespective of land rents and bank charges. Consequently many a man, through drought conditions and other circumstances over which he had no control, was forced to leave his selection to seek work elsewhere in order to provide for his wife and children. I have here a letter from Mr. J. M. Fletcher, in my electorate, and amongst other things he states—

“ A settler here with eight children, the oldest a boy of fourteen, could not meet

[*Mr. Peterson.*]

his obligations to the bank, so after a considerable amount of bullying from that institution he decided to try and get a job to keep himself and his family and clear some of his bad debts. He did so, and the bank, hearing that he was working, immediately sent him a letter threatening to take drastic action, and demanding that he pay £1 per week out of his earnings to clear the arrears of interest and redemption. He promptly got off his selection as the demand was so ridiculous.”

Mr. HARTLEY: When was that?

Mr. PETERSON: That was only recently. Most hon. members will realise that when drought conditions and other causes which have been mentioned, for which the soldier settler is not responsible, force the settler to leave his wife and children on the holding to try, if possible, to earn enough elsewhere to pay the grocer's and other bills and return later on in good seasons to work that holding, he should not be harassed.

Mr. HARTLEY: You know that Ridglands never did support anyone on a small area.

Mr. PETERSON: I agree with the hon. member. I have been speaking of Ridglands as it is, and not as it ought to be. I agree with the hon. member that it was not suitable for a soldier settlement area; but what we are concerned with is the soldier settlers who are there and are down and out. If this Bill is designed to give them relief, then I welcome it to the fullest extent possible. I hope that what the Minister said this morning will be carried out in this Bill.

Another reason why the Ridglands settlement has been a failure was that during the cotton boom quite a number of soldiers took up land under the impression that they were going to make a very fine thing out of growing cotton. This is not the time to discuss whether it was right or wrong; but all those settlers had ratoon cotton growing, and just at the period when they were expecting to reap a decent cheque in order to meet their commitments the anti-ratoon cotton legislation was passed through this Chamber. That threw them right back to where they started from. These are causes which led up to the present unsatisfactory condition on this settlement. We could have overcome them quite easily had we done the right thing at that particular time and altered the legislation later. That is one reason why those settlers are in such an unfortunate position.

The next cause is the dry seasons. I hope the Minister will embody in the Bill a clause to wipe out the accrued interest commitments on these settlements. It is not too much to ask that these men who have braved the elements in and out of season should be given an opportunity of starting right over again.

Let us take as another example the homes that were erected on Ridglands. These homes were built when prices were at their highest. Any number of these homes were abandoned, and, though they cost from £245 to £300 each, they were sold by the department at auction at prices up to £45. When the same settlers asked the Government to write down the capital value of those homes to £35 or £45 the Government refused to do so, and preferred to allow them to get into the hands of speculative dealers, who came out from Rockhampton and purchased them

at that price. There is nothing fair in that. It would have been far better to allow the soldiers to have the homes for that price and remain on the land. That is another reason which has helped to drive the soldier off the land.

One can go over to Fairfield and see about thirty houses which have been erected from buildings which were previously at Beerburum, while at Rockhampton one may see homes erected there from the soldiers' homes previously on the Ridgeland soldier settlement. A grave error was made when concessions were not given to the soldiers themselves. I know that in a number of cases the obligations could not be met—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: As a matter of fact, the owners could not keep the doors and windows in some of the houses.

Mr. PETERSON: That also applies to the cities. These things have a habit of walking, and I can quite understand what the hon. gentleman means. I hope that provision will be made whereby the capital cost will be written down. To-day the Minister has heard of losses in other enterprises, and even private enterprises, that have had to be written off. That applies to Chillagoe, the State stations, and many other services; and the sooner the Minister realises that aspect of the question the better it will be for our soldier settlers.

I quite agree that the Government cannot give this money away without expecting some return. The Government placed people on land, and reserved certain areas for soldier settlement, where priority was to be given to soldiers. They also took upon themselves to provide roads and other facilities, and it is up to them to carry out their part of the contract. That has been done to a certain extent. People have been put on the land, and road facilities have been provided, but thousands and thousands of pounds have been spent on the Ridgeland soldier settlement roads, and those roads will not be used extensively. That is simply because the benefits now proposed in this Bill were not brought forward two years ago. As a result, the Government have not only lost all the soldier settlers who should have been on the settlements, but they will lose the money invested in those roads directly and indirectly. The shire councils are responsible for a certain part of the money, and the Federal Government are also responsible for a certain amount. Most of the money will be wasted, and I hope the Government will be seized of the desirability of not wasting further money unnecessarily on such unsatisfactory schemes. We should encourage these men to go on suitable selections, and we should encourage them to remain there. Eventually this drought will break and conditions will then improve. That encouragement could be given by writing down the capital cost and allowing the settlers to benefit by the amount of interest they have paid. When we receive the Bill we shall be able to see if it contains the promises that have been made. Meanwhile, I welcome the utterances of the Minister, and sincerely trust that the benefits he foreshadows will be applied to the soldier settlers of Queensland.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. T. Dunstan, *Gympie*): I take it this Committee is asked "to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill to afford relief to discharged soldiers who have become

settlers on the land." That being so, I do not see why all the delay should take place in anticipating provisions of the Bill which I have but briefly outlined. I reserved a fuller statement of the provisions of this measure until the second reading, but hon. members opposite have raised all sorts of questions and suggestions. One hon. member suggested that the Bill should be withdrawn, another suggested that a board should be appointed, and a still further suggestion was that there should be another complete survey of the whole position of soldier settlements. It seems to me that that implies that some hon. members opposite are out more for political propaganda than for giving practical relief to the returned soldiers. Even the amendment does not get them anywhere. The motion that I moved reads—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to afford relief to discharged soldiers who have obtained advances under the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Acts, 1917 to 1920, and who have been unable wholly to meet their engagements, and also to amend the said Acts in certain particulars."

The Opposition propose to omit the words "in certain particulars," and even if those words are omitted it would still leave the Bill to deal with those soldier settlers "who have been unable wholly to meet their engagements." Members of the Opposition argue that the Bill should be extended to give concessions to those who have wholly met their obligations.

Mr. KING: That is not right.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: At least one member of the Opposition said that some concession should be given to those who have met their obligations. That would not be possible, even if the words "in certain particulars" were omitted. I take it that hon. members opposite are in favour of the soldier settlers procuring relief at the earliest possible moment. This matter has had the earnest consideration of competent officers of the department, and it has taken a considerable amount of thought, consideration, and judgment to draft this measure, and, that being so, I contend there is no need for this delay or for the amendment, and, when hon. members see the provisions contained in the Bill when it is introduced, they will regard it as a liberal measure for the relief of soldier settlers in Queensland.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted (*Mr. Warren's amendment*) stand part of the resolution—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 37.

Mr. Barber	Mr. Larcombe
" Bedford	" Llewelyn
" Bertram	" Lloyd
" Bruce	" McLachlan
" Bulcock	" Mullan
" Carter	" O'Keefe
" Collins	" Payne
" Conroy	" Pease
" Cooper, F. A.	" Riordan
" Cooper, W.	" Ryan, C. J.
" Dash	" Ryan, H. J.
" Dunstan	" Smith
" Ferricks	" Stopford
" Gledson	" Weir
" Hanlon	" Wellington
" Hanson	" Wilson
" Hartley	" Winstanley
" Hynes	" Wright
" Kirwan	

Tellers: Mr. Hanson and Mr. Weir.

Hon. T. Dunstan.]

NOES, 23.

Mr. Barnes, G. P.	Mr. Moore
" Barnes, W. H.	" Morgan
" Bell	" Nott
" Brand	" Peterson
" Clayton	" Roberts
" Corser	" Russell, H. M.
" Deacon	" Russell, W. A.
" Edwards	" Sizer
" Kerr	" Swayne
" King	" Taylor
" Logan	" Warren
" Maxwell	

Tellers: Mr. Edwards and Mr. Peterson.

PAIR.

AYE.	No.
Mr. Land.	Mr. Appel.

Resolved in the negative.

Original question (*Mr. Dunstan's motion*) put and passed.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to a resolution.

The resolution was agreed to.

FIRST READING.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. T. Dunstan, *Gympie*) presented the Bill, and moved—

"That the Bill be now read a first time."

Question put and passed.

SECOND READING.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. T. Dunstan, *Gympie*): At the initiatory stage of this Bill I said that the measure was the outcome of a careful and special investigation made by officers deputed by the Department of Public Lands for that purpose, after conferences with the officers of the Agricultural Bank and consideration of representations by various organisations for and on behalf of the returned soldier settlers. After this exhaustive inquiry the Bill proposes to give concessions in the following directions:—

"That on the Atherton, Burrandowan, Cecil Plains, and Ridgeland soldier settlements accrued interest up to 31st December, 1924, be written off and interest charged as from the 1st January, 1925.

"That on the Bald Hills, Enoggera, Highlands, Mount Gravatt, and Mount Hutton soldier settlements accrued interest to the 31st December, 1925, be written off and interest charged as from the 1st January, 1926.

"That on the Beerburrum soldier settlement accrued interest to the 31st December, 1927, be written off and interest charged as from the 1st January, 1928."

The Stanthorpe settlement, of course, is principally devoted to fruitgrowing, and in respect of that settlement the concession is—

"That on the Stanthorpe soldier settlement (fruit culture being the principal industry), as it takes approximately five years for deciduous fruit trees to come into full bearing, accrued interest be written off and charged as from the expiration of five years from the date of planting of the fruit trees on each individual holding."

[*Hon. T. Dunstan.*]

There is the further concession—

"That on holdings under the administration of the Agricultural Bank accrued interest be written off and charged as from the 1st January, 1925."

As to the capital amounts, special concessions are to be made. On all settlements except Atherton it is proposed that the amount of such capital money advanced shall become part of the capital amount of the existing advance and become part of a long-term loan for forty years to each discharged soldier.

In regard to Atherton the proposal is that the amounts of the special advances of capital as short-term loans shall be repaid in half-yearly instalments covering a period of three years ending on the 31st December, 1927.

In regard to other selections all interest accrued due on or before 31st December, 1924, and unpaid on 31st January, 1925, shall be written off and forgiven so [3 p.m.] that no further liability to pay the amount of such interest shall remain upon the selectors so concerned.

Power is given to the Minister in connection with the long term loan where he thinks the circumstances or merits of the case warrant such concession to reduce the amount of capital money and the amount of such advance outstanding as from the date fixed by the Minister and so reduced shall be deemed to be the amount of such advance outstanding, and the borrower to whom such relief has been extended shall be under no liability to repay the sum by which the said capital amount has been reduced.

In connection with the interest due upon advances other than the special advances all interest accrued due on or before 31st December, 1924, and unpaid on 31st January, 1925, shall be written off and forgiven so that no further liability to pay the amount of such interest shall remain. In the case of borrowers in the Bald Hills, Enoggera, Highlands, Mount Gravatt, and Mount Hutton soldier settlements, all interest accrued due and unpaid on 31st December, 1925, shall be written off and forgiven so that no further liability to pay the amount of such interest shall remain.

In connection with Beerburrum all interest accrued due or unpaid on 31st December, 1927, shall be written off.

Mr. HARTLEY: Why the difference in the dates?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Because of special circumstances ascertained by the officers of the department which makes it necessary.

Mr. KERR: It is a wrong basis altogether.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It is justified by the reports of the officers concerned. In connection with the Atherton soldier settlement there are special concessions regarding periods of tenure and rent fixation on the capital value. It is proposed that the tenure shall be divided into different periods. The first period shall be a broken period up to 31st March, 1926, and the rental shall be 1 per cent. of the capital value. The second period shall be of the duration of seven years up to 1933, and the rental will be also 1 per cent. on the capital value. The third period shall be a period of seven years up to 1940, and the rental shall

be 2 per cent. on the capital value. Thereafter the determined rent shall be 3 per cent., and shall be made by the Land Court on the basis of the capital value of the unimproved land compared with land of a similar quality in the same neighbourhood.

Provision is also made in the Bill to enable the Minister to grant extensions of areas where the areas are found to be inadequate, and for the transfer of additional holdings as well as of the original holding as if they were part of one selection.

Power is also conferred in the Bill to deal with surplus lands that may be taken up by returned soldiers as additions to their areas; and there is a further provision to enable a returned soldier seeking to transfer land to execute a mortgage on his area if he is unable otherwise to secure the balance of the purchase money.

The concessions I have enumerated amount to a very considerable sum.

Mr. CORSER: How much?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: To give effect as soon as possible to this relief, in several cases we have anticipated the provisions of this Bill and granted the concessions accordingly. This Bill will ratify the action of the Minister in that regard. The concessions already given, and which are proposed to be given, include—

1. Reduction in loan indebtedness consequent upon revaluation of improvements by the Soldier Settlement Revaluation Board.
2. Writing off arrears of interest to 31st December, 1924, and waiving interest in certain group settlements for various periods up to 31st December, 1927, each settlement having been dealt with on its merits after careful consideration.
3. Suspending collection of redemption already due on short-term loans.
4. Consolidating of special advances for short terms with those for long-terms, and spreading repayments over full remaining period (up to thirty-three years) of long-term loans.

By these concessions the loss involved to the State to the 30th June, 1926, was—

	£
Principal	272,162
Interest	205,528

The concession waiving interest for the period up to 31st December, 1927, on certain group soldier settlements is estimated to amount to £29,048. The foregoing three amounts aggregate £506,738, which represents the amount foregone by the State as relief to the soldier settlements in Queensland.

Mr. COLLINS: What about Chillagoe now?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The net estimated loss to the State on soldier settlement to 31st December, 1930, is about £1,250,000. This figure is arrived at after taking into account the rebates received from or promised by the Commonwealth Government, and represents the contribution by the State Government to 31st December, 1930, to soldier settlement. The Commonwealth Government have also contributed about £800,000 in rebates. Thus, to soldier settlement generally there has been conceded the equivalent of over £2,000,000.

As I stated at the outset of my remarks, these concessions are liberal, and the provisions of the Bill are practical ones, and as far as the Government can go under the present condition of our finances. I am satisfied that they will give very great relief to soldier settlers in this State. That being so, I trust that the Bill will be passed with all expedition, and that the relief granted by the Government will soon be enjoyed by those occupying the soldier settlements in the State of Queensland. I beg to move—

“That the Bill be now read a second time.”

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): The Minister has read out a few comments in regard to this Bill and the clauses contained therein.

Mr. COLLINS: That is very unkind of you.

Mr. CORSER: On behalf of the Opposition, I want to enter an emphatic protest against the manner in which the business of this House is being conducted.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr. CORSER: We received a copy of the Bill only after the second reading was moved.

The SPEAKER: Order! This House approved of the introduction of this Bill.

Mr. CORSER: The Opposition have not approved of it.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr. CORSER: We have not had an opportunity of perusing the Bill. The Bill was handed to us after the Minister had started his second reading speech, and the hon. gentleman gave us some illustrations of the value of the Bill. We have not had an opportunity to read it. Any intelligent person in the community realises that it is up to the Government to give the Opposition an opportunity to read the Bill.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member knows that under the Standing Orders a Bill may be passed through all its stages in one day. As a matter of fact, some days ago the House approved of this being done.

Mr. CORSER: We are not talking of what the Government are able to do, but of what is a fair thing to do. It will be agreed that there is no necessity for the Government to proceed with the Bill immediately. They could at least have proceeded with it at a later hour of the day, in the meantime giving the Opposition an opportunity to peruse the measure. It was impossible to listen to the Minister and at the same time read the Bill; yet we are supposed to talk on it. We are keenly interested in the Bill. We realise our obligations to our soldier settlers.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The Opposition have talked for hours to-day without having seen the Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: And said nothing.

Mr. CORSER: If I said nothing, I would have done exactly what the Secretary for Agriculture always does. If I valued my speech the same as he values his speeches, there would not be enough money in the

Mr. Corser }

country to pay me for it. (Opposition laughter.) In the interests of our soldier settlers this should not be regarded as a party measure, and the Opposition should have an opportunity of becoming familiar with the proposed amendments. From the brief perusal I have made of the Bill the only advantages I can see are that it is proposed to relieve the settlers of the interest on small payments for seeds and other little concessions that have been granted. I may be wrong, because I have not had an opportunity to read the Bill properly, but the Minister did not indicate any specific relief when making his second reading speech. The hon. gentleman merely told us what the State proposes to lose in 1930.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: No—up to 1930.

Mr. CORSER: Up to 1930. That is what I tried to convey to the Minister. The hon. gentleman complained that there will be a loss to the State of £1,250,000. I am not surprised at that. We have always complained of the way in which the soldier settlement scheme has operated in Queensland. We have claimed right along that unfruitful land has been given to soldiers and that money has been wasted.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I told you that these concessions represented over half a million pounds sterling.

Mr. CORSER: But the hon. gentleman did not tell us that the Federal Government are relieving the State to the extent of £800,000, and that that amount was debited by his department as State relief against the soldier settlement. I am sure that, when the Federal Treasurer wanted to relieve our soldier settlers, he intended that amount to wipe off some of their indebtedness. Instead of that, we find that the Treasurer or the Secretary for Public Lands is relieving the State of that indebtedness. I am concerned with regard to the Bill, and so is every hon. member of the Opposition. We were hoping that the Bill was going to be the means of giving genuine assistance to soldier settlers.

Mr. O'KEEFE: I am as much concerned in Chillagoe.

Mr. CORSER: The hon. member should be concerned, and he should support us with regard to it. I do not think the soldiers have received value. When the Minister says that in 1930, under these proposals, £2,600,000 will be lost by the Commonwealth and the State, I do not think that even then the soldier will have received value. It would be far better for the soldier settlers if the Minister admitted that the policy carried out by the State Government in regard to the soldier settlement has been a failure; but, instead of that, he has endeavoured, and the Premier has endeavoured, to put the whole responsibility on the soldier settler.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: This Bill is to afford relief; you object to it.

Mr. CORSER: It is a Bill to relieve soldier settlers of something that the Government cannot get from them. It is not going to give genuine assistance to the soldiers. It is to make legal the non-collection of money that they cannot secure—and small parcels of money at that. It is not a Bill that will provide assistance which would mean pros-

perity to the soldiers. That is what we want.

Mr. O'KEEFE: Are you advocating taking the land off them for that debt?

Mr. CORSER: A lot of them have gone off the land. They don't own the land, as it is perpetual leasehold, and you cannot take it off them. They are off the land. We have a lot of suggestions that we would like to put forward, but we have not had the opportunity to do it. We have not had an opportunity to peruse the two or three pages of this important Bill, which is thrust on us at this late hour of the session. It is a most important measure. It is one that is supposed to have occupied the attention of Ministers of the Crown for many years. It is the result of deputations and many conferences between soldiers, members of Parliament, and Ministers of the Crown, extending over many years; yet the Government have delayed introducing this measure until the closing hours of the session.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Better late than never.

Mr. CORSER: Better late than never; but better never late. (Laughter.) The Minister hands us the Bill, immediately makes his second reading speech, and then we are called upon to give an intelligent criticism of his proposals to give relief to returned soldiers. Judging from the remarks of the Minister, the relief proposed is the very minimum that any Government could offer. If the Government realised that they had failed in regard to soldier settlement in the past—that they had put the soldiers on land that for the most part was unproductive—that they had spent the money in connection with soldier settlement in ways which have resulted in the loss of that money—then we might hope to arrive at a successful solution of the problem. If the suggestions made by myself and other hon. members of the Opposition years ago had been adopted, we would not now be asking for a few hours in which to read the Bill and to consider what is proposed by the Minister.

Mr. DASH: In what year did you make that speech?

Mr. CORSER: In 1917.

Mr. DASH: Just a year before the elections.

Mr. CORSER: Not a year before the elections, but in the year in which the soldiers were put on the land, and after which it was necessary for the Government to have a redistribution of seats.

Mr. O'KEEFE: On private members' day?

Mr. CORSER: On private members' day.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. CORSER: The suggestions and forecasts made in 1917 by members of the Opposition were the cause of the introduction of this Bill. This is not a Bill to relieve soldier settlers, but to relieve the Government. The Government cannot enforce payment of the amounts owing, so they have introduced this Bill to wipe off these amounts. The Bill is not a liberal one, as it will not get over the difficulties which exist, and will not help the soldiers in the manner suggested by the Opposition. It does not propose to alter the policy of the Government in any direction; it does not state that the Government want

[Mr. Corser.

to assist the soldier settlers and their wives and children. The Minister would lead us to infer that the soldier settlers are not a desirable class of people to put on the land—not from a personal but from an industrial point of view. In the Upper Burnett district the soldier settlers are of the average settler class. We have not got farmers there who are all prosperous, but they are average individuals, who have taken up land under conditions which, owing to Providence, are fortunately good. The soldier settlers generally have been handicapped by the State putting them upon inferior land—on salty marshes such as obtain at Beerburum—and other impossible places.

Mr. WRIGHT: What about Calico Creek?

Mr. CORSER: They are prosperous there; but that is not a soldier settlement. I admit that I have not been able to give an intelligent review of this Bill in my second reading speech, because I have not had the opportunity of reading the Bill.

Mr. RIORDAN: You have made a very good speech.

Mr. CORSER: I listened to the Minister; but what I heard from him did not help me very much, and I am afraid it is going to help the settlers less; but the time I have taken up in protesting against the procedure adopted will give members of the Opposition an opportunity of reading the Bill, and they will see that there are very few factors of importance in the measure.

Whilst the Speaker would not allow me to deal with the Bill in detail at this stage, I might, in a general way, refer to the provisions of the Bill. There is not one member of the Opposition who will say that this is not an important measure, and there is not one of us who is not prepared to sit to-night, or to sit all night, in discussing any measure which will help the returned soldiers, and give them an opportunity of making a decent living.

Mr. RIORDAN: You are real martyrs.

Mr. CORSER: I do not claim that we should be martyrs by doing so, as we should only be doing the duty which is expected of us.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must deal with the Bill.

Mr. CORSER: We have indications of relief in the shape of wiping off interest owing and the postponement of future interest payments; but we know from the Minister's statement that the wiping off of interest is only to apply to those who cannot pay. The Minister knows they cannot and will not pay, and therefore he has introduced certain clauses into this Bill.

We want to be in a position to give them a generous deal. They will be no better off as a result of the concessions which the Minister says he is giving them, because they cannot and will not pay in any case. He is only making them a small grant, and it is a wonder the Treasurer does not come along to-morrow with a Bill charging them gift duty on the reduction on their indebtedness.

Clause 2 deals with relief in respect of special advances for short terms. That was a feature of which the Minister has made quite a lot. Advances for water, food, tobacco! And interest on those advances is to be added to the capital indebtedness

of the soldier in most cases. Nothing about the interest on the debt which has accrued over a period of years for the clearing of land by unemployed! Not by men selected by the settlers themselves, but by unemployed engaged by the State to clear land which was not worth 5s. an acre, although the State charged them £20 to £25 an acre merely for clearing the timber off it.

Mr. RIORDAN: Why stop at £25?

Mr. CORSER: I am within the limit when I say from £20 to £25—I want to be modest in any statement I make. Four or 5 acres were cleared on 20 or 25-acre perpetual leaseholds, and the settler, before he ever saw his block, was indebted to the Agricultural Bank to the extent of £100. The Commonwealth Government set aside £625 as an advance to each settler—not an advance by the Secretary for Public Lands, the Deputy Premier, or the Cabinet. The Queensland Government have advanced nothing to soldier settlers. Our Agricultural Bank has done nothing for them. That is why in 1917 I moved that the time had arrived when we should advance them, at any rate, not less than ordinary settlers were getting.

Mr. O'KEEFE: Did you ever speak the truth?

Mr. CORSER: Yes, when I told the hon. member what I thought of him the last time. The ordinary selector can borrow up to £1,700 from the Agricultural Bank, if he is lucky; but the soldier settler gets nothing from the bank at all.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It has cost us £2,225,000 in indebtedness to the Commonwealth.

Mr. CORSER: The Commonwealth Government wiped off £800,000 out of £3,000,000, but you spent all that money and wasted it. What did you ever pay for it?

The SPEAKER: Order! Will the hon. member address the Chair?

Mr. CORSER: The Premier claims that the Government have paid from £4 to £9 an acre for land for soldier settlements, but the soldier settler would not give from 4s. to 9s. for it. To whom did the Government pay that money? We have not asked for an inquiry into that.

Mr. RIORDAN: What about Atherton?

Mr. CORSER: Never mind about Atherton. I am talking about areas I know something about—some of the salt marshes round about the city of Brisbane that they opened for soldier settlement.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Soldiers' homes.

Mr. CORSER: No—soldiers' farms. They might have grown oysters there; they could not have grown anything else. It is too poor even to grow prickly-pear.

It is a great pity that there is not something broad and businesslike in the proposal. In the early stages of soldier settlement in New South Wales the State Government gave to every settler the opportunity of getting his £625 advance from the Commonwealth. In Queensland we had a Land Act which permitted a perpetual

[3.30 p.m.] leasehold tenure, but in New South Wales the land laws permitted the soldier settler to go into any district and select a ready-made farm to the

Mr. Corser.]

value of £3,000. Immediately he selected a farm the Repatriation Department in Sydney requested a local committee, formed for the purpose, to ascertain whether the value placed upon the farm by the prospective buyer was a fair value.

Mr. WRIGHT: Still they were not successful.

Mr. CORSER: If the local committee decided that the value was a fair value, the department would send along the Repatriation Committee to make a report, and, if they agreed that the value was a fair one, the Government of New South Wales would purchase the farm, payable over forty years, which would enable the selector to go on to the holding with his wife and family with the possibility of enjoying some degree of comfort. In addition, the settler would be paid the £625 made available by the Commonwealth Government.

We did not have those possibilities in Queensland. The settler was advanced £625 to make a farm and a living on it, the outcome of which is the spectacle before us to-day of this amending Bill. The Minister commenced to deliver his second reading speech before we had obtained the Bill, but fortunately, Mr. Speaker, because of your kindness to the Opposition, he was checked until the Bill was placed in our hands. Again I emphatically protest against the action of the Minister, not only because it affects the rights of the Opposition, but mainly in the interest of the soldiers themselves. We might be slighted, but our feelings do not count in comparison with the needs of the soldier settlers. One of the greatest factors to be considered is the comfort and prosperity of the soldier settlers in the future and their efforts to make good their losses of the past. It is a great pity that the Minister did not take the Opposition into his confidence and give us a certain amount of time during the present sitting to enable us to review the proposed legislation so that we might be able to offer criticism and suggestions which might have been of great value to the soldier settlers and to the credit of Queensland.

HON. W. H. BARNES (*Wynnum*): I would like to emphasise what has been said in a certain direction by the hon. member for Burnett. We all must admit that this is an important Bill, and it is very much to be regretted that we have not been given the opportunity of having a few hours to consider the Bill before discussing it. It is quite impossible for any hon. member, no matter how capable he may be, to sit down and correctly summarise the Bill. If we commenced to read the first clause of the Bill, you, Mr. Speaker, would immediately pull us up and remind us that we were committing a breach of the Standing Orders. The Government have made a very grievous mistake in not giving us time to consider the measure.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You wasted three hours this morning.

HON. W. H. BARNES: In my answer I speak only with respect to myself. This is the first time that I have spoken on this Bill.

We have to get back to the time when these men came forward and volunteered to help us. Therefore, anything that we can do in this House relating to soldiers is not too good for them. I do not allege that every soldier who went on the land was

suitable for the undertaking he engaged in. As in other walks of life, there were many who imagined that they fitted into the niche exactly. Unfortunately, in many cases, the selection of land made for soldier settlement was not satisfactory. I have always held that, whenever the Government are going to put people on the land, whether it is the soldier or anybody else, it is a sin and a crime to put them on bad land. It spells absolute disaster and means killing their initiative. I have been to Beerburum, and I recognise that an awful mistake was made there. I found there people who were slaying their very "innards" out trying to make a "do" of the land, and if you, Mr. Speaker, had been there, the manner in which the women were working in an endeavour to help their husbands would have appealed to you. They had a proposition which was impossible to deal with in a satisfactory way. Someone committed a very grave blunder there. I notice in the cursory glance I have given to this Bill and in following the speech of the Minister, that certain areas, rentals, and dates have been defined; but, speaking more particularly of other lands that I know, it does not get at the root of some of the difficulties of soldier settlement. I hope that every hon. member will deal with this matter in the spirit which has prompted me to-day, and that is with a desire to help the soldier. The areas of land in many cases have been too small, while in other cases the land has been so inferior that it has not been worth while to put people on it. That is really the secret of the trouble. I am not attempting to bring discredit on the Government in the matter. The fact that grievous mistakes have been made is revealed by the fact that concessions amounting to over £2,000,000 are under consideration to-day, in addition to £500,000 allowed by way of rebate in interest. That does not redound to the credit of Queensland and those who have had to deal with soldier settlement. There is one clause in the Bill—I think it is clause 3—which gives the Minister power, upon the recommendation of an officer of his department, to make an allowance involving even the wiping off of the principal indebtedness.

Mr. WARREN: That is the only concession in the Bill.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I do not say that, because I have not yet fully read the Bill, but I know that provision exists to reduce or wipe out the capital sum altogether. I do not know that I would have risen but for the fact that, no matter what the intention of the Government, the Bill does not get at the foundation of the difficulty. It is only putting a patch on something that is no good to-day. If the Government wish to give relief to the returned soldier settler—by all means make sure who the soldier is—let them get right down to the root of the trouble. I do not say that every returned soldier should be reinstated on the land. I heard the hon. member for Normanby say that the land in his electorate set aside for this purpose was no good. What is the use of putting our returned men on that type of land?

Mr. HARTLEY: He referred to a small area as being no good.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I want to be fair in my criticism. What is the use of putting them on land that is no good? That

[*Mr. Corser.*

will merely result in the introduction of another Bill in years to come, confessing that the Government have again failed. I am not desirous of criticising the Bill unfairly, but I want the Government to see that the returned man has a fair chance on the land, otherwise the relief will be merely temporary, and then what will happen?

Mr. ROBERTS: More debt.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Yes, more debt and more broken hearts—broken by the weight of the debt that is resting upon them. The bigger and the better the man, the more such a man prefers to fight his own way out of the difficulty, and to paddle his own canoe. Here we have a Bill designed presumably to help the soldiers, but the Minister has not gone into the matter as he should have done, otherwise further relief would have been given and the slate would have been cleaned, even though it meant further expenditure. Let us see that these men are given a fresh start, and that they are given an opportunity to make a success of life.

Mr. HARTLEY (*Fitzroy*): I hope that, in Committee, hon. members will give this Bill very earnest and sincere consideration. I hope that undue haste will not obtain in putting the Bill through in Committee. Personally I have to confess to some surprise at grasping as much of the Bill as I have done in the short time at my disposal. I take it the Government are sincerely desirous of making an honest and equitable adjustment of the liabilities of our returned soldier settlers. I hope they will so adjust matters as to give settlers a chance to liquidate their liabilities, and that those liabilities will now be reduced by what the Government think a just and right estimate.

The principle of wiping off unpaid interest is a good one; but, if you are going to differentiate in the date and give a concession of one year's interest to this group of settlers, two years' interest to that group, three years' interest to another group, and no concession at all to another, then I say the principle is absolutely unsound, and there is no justification for it. The only way you can justify a differentiation in the amount of interest to be wiped out is on the basis of the greater the failure the greater the forgiveness. If it is on those lines that these adjustments are to be made, I still say that it is wrong.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It is the result of exhaustive and careful inquiries by competent officers.

Mr. HARTLEY: It may be submitted after exhaustive inquiries by competent officers. So were the soldier settlements settled after exhaustive inquiries and advice of competent officers and of experts. Notwithstanding what a number of practical men said, the settlements were gone on with, and to-day we have the spectacle in regard to these settlements that it is difficult, if not impossible, under the conditions obtaining for the men to get a living, and the capital cost has been increased beyond all bounds. I want the Minister to realise that I am not speaking in any spirit of petty carping criticism. In the early stages of land settlement for returned soldiers I was intimately connected with the work as a member of the Rockhampton War Council and Land Settle-

ment Committee, and while we made mistakes, we did what the majority thought was the best thing to be done. With the knowledge I had of land settlement and of the land on which the soldiers are settled, I say you cannot differentiate in the concession given in regard to the interest. There is no justification for any differentiation, and you cannot make it a right or just thing by saying, "We will forgive three years' interest on this settlement and only one year's interest on that settlement."

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It is up to those dates.

Mr. HARTLEY: The Government are going to grant a concession in regard to interest up to 1924 for settlements in the Central district, such as Ridglands and Calioran; a concession of interest up to 1925 in connection with Highlands, Enoggera, and several other places; while, if you take Beerburum—the oldest settlement of the lot and the one that ought to have been the most successful—the Government are granting a concession of interest up to the end of 1927. I want to ask the Minister how he can justify that? Beerburum should be the most self-supporting settlement of the whole lot because of its closeness to Brisbane. It is within 50 miles of Brisbane; it has the best facilities for marketing; it has experimental plots; it had an area cleared and men put on the settlement in the very earliest days, and therefore it should be the most self-supporting at the present time.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We are taking actual conditions.

Mr. HARTLEY: I fail to accept the evidence, because we have heard it stated in this House—I have stated it on the authority of official reports—that the greater number of settlers on Beerburum were successful. My information to-day is that about 25 per cent. of the settlers on Beerburum were failures and the other 75 per cent. are not only revenue-earning, but in several instances the settlers are earning big incomes. From conversations I have had with men acquainted with Beerburum, I find that some of the settlers there make £500 or £600 a year, and have been doing so for some time past. There may be seasons when they do not.

Mr. WRIGHT: Hon. members opposite said that Beerburum was a total failure.

Mr. HARTLEY: I say that Beerburum is not a total failure. A big percentage of the settlers there are earning good incomes at the present time. That being so, if we are going to make a differentiation in the rate of interest, we ought to make it on a sliding scale in the opposite way to what is indicated. If we are going to give the Beerburum settlers a remission of their interest up to 1927, why should we not treat in the same way the smaller settlements outside, the country on some of which is just as bad as and even worse than Beerburum? Beerburum is not a bad fruit-growing centre if they can get a market for their fruit; and half their trouble has been through lack of market. If we are going to extend the time of forgiveness for interest up to the end of 1927 in the case of Beerburum, by what stretch of imagination can we say that the interest should not be written off to the same extent in the case of Ridglands, Calioran, Highlands, and other places. Take Mount Gravatt, for instance.

Mr. Hartley.]

The expert who conceived a soldier settlement at Mount Gravatt ought to have a putty bust made of himself and put into the Executive Building. If we are going to forgive the interest up to the end of 1927 in regard to Beerburum—which is well-established, well-nursed, and has an experimental farm with every facility—surely it is right to give the settlers in other places the same concessions.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: What is the good of perpetuating an impossible place?

Mr. HARTLEY: Mount Gravatt, for instance, ought to be wiped out of existence and the men put somewhere else.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. HARTLEY: I offer this suggestion to the Minister. There is no justification for refusing to remit the interest up to the end of 1927 on Ridglands and other settlements which should never have been selected for closer settlement if you are going to fix 1927 for Beerburum. I strongly opposed the selection of those places not only on the War Council but also when the then Minister in charge of soldier settlements brought the matter forward; but it is unfortunate that men on the committee who have had much more experience on the land were in favour of it. As a matter of fact, the Ridglands settlement is a stretch of country that nobody in the Central district ever attempted to use except for grazing purposes—it was never used for agriculture. On Alton Downs, closer in, mixed farming and dairying are carried on; but they have never got to any state of prosperity because the seasons are against them. You get one good season and two or three dry ones. At the present time the settlers are driving their cattle miles and miles away to water. Kiddies cannot go to school because their horses are too poor to carry them. I hope that, when we reach the Committee stage, the Minister will be prepared to accept an amendment to equalise the terms for which accrued interest is to be wiped off. I cannot see any justification for differentiation. If there has been a failure at Beerburum, there has been a failure at other places, and, if it is right to wipe out interest in regard to Beerburum, it is equally right to wipe it out up to the same date with respect to other places. I hope that the Minister will accept an amendment on those lines in order to equalise matters.

There is a provision in clause 3 to the effect that where the capital cost is found to be too high the Minister, on the advice of his officers, may write off a certain amount. If it is a good thing to forgo interest for a certain term of years, why should we not write off a certain percentage of the capital cost on all these settlements?

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. KERR: That is a sensible suggestion.

Mr. HARTLEY: I know the ins and outs of this matter. I want the House to realise the position and get upon a good basis. We do not want to rely on a bookkeeping adjustment of accounts. I doubt whether all the soldier settlements in Queensland are worth £2,000,000. They might be, but, although four or five highly-placed public servants valued them at that, I would not like to give anything like that for them. I would not like to give £50,000 for all Beerburum, and it is the best of the lot except the northern settlements. I have some land

close handy that I will give away pretty cheaply to anybody who wants it.

Mr. PETERSON: That shows that there must have been a good deal of waste.

Mr. HARTLEY: It does not, but the hon. member knows that, when the soldier settlements were undertaken, there was no department or machinery of any kind to deal with them. In addition to their other duties, members of Parliament and public officials had thrown upon them the duty of going on to various committees to deal with the question, and they had to deal with it quickly. Good land was hard to get. We could not buy the land on which we would have liked to settle the soldiers, because it would have made the capital cost too high, and we took what we thought was the best land we could get at the price. That was one factor, and another was that we had no department for stocking the farms.

Mr. PETERSON: I agree with you about Ridglands. That was a bad proposition. Who was responsible for it?

Mr. HARTLEY: The Rockhampton War Council.

Mr. PETERSON: Some of the Rockhampton merchants ought to have been made to live on it.

Mr. HARTLEY: Let me tell the hon. member that the men who comprised the Rockhampton War Council were the most reputable, honourable, and successful graziers and business men in Rockhampton and district. Of course, I except myself; I was the Government nominee. They were very favourably inclined towards Ridglands and Calioran, but events have proved that they were wrong. At the same time, they had in mind a bigger area than 150 or 170 acres, and their idea was that it was a grazing proposition, perhaps with a little mixed farming and some dairying; but even in those industries the seasons have been against them. I say that all these settlements are too highly capitalised. I am referring mostly to the early ones started, in the first four or five years. An expensive staff had to be collected. We had to buy horses and cattle at top market prices, and the horse dealers in Brisbane landed horses on the Government for about four times the price at which they could have been purchased. The result is that the capital cost of the settlements is very high. I would not like to make an estimate of how much should be written off, but I think that a fixed amount should be agreed upon to which the capital on all the settlements could be written down so that the settlers would not have to work on farms which are over-capitalised. I hope that in Committee the Minister will accept an amendment in the direction of fixing a uniform date for the commencement of the payment of interest.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*): I think it is plain that the Government have made no attempt to rectify a regrettable position. The Minister frankly acknowledged that they were limited by considerations of finance. I took a note of his statement that the Bill was as far as the Government could go at present in view of the position of the finances. Well, if soldier settlement is to wait until the Government are in a better financial position, it will be a considerable time before a fair deal is given to the returned men. The financial consideration should not be the paramount factor in a question like this. If

[*Mr. Hartley.*

the Government want to make soldier settlement a success, as they claim—and I have no doubt they would be very glad to see them successful—why do they not tackle the matter in a proper way?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: This is a very liberal measure.

Mr. KERR: It is merely tinkering with the question. Just let me refer to a case in my electorate, which is one of many throughout Queensland. You have a small block of leasehold land on which [4 p.m.] is constructed a house, hundreds of which are being sold to-day for £50. In addition, there is a ton or two of iron, a few yards of wire-netting, and other small items such as the hen-coops incidental to poultry-raising, on which is placed a capital value of £800. Is that a proper capital value to place on that holding? Why, the thing is too absurd to contemplate. It is not worth more than £300. A revaluation of the settlements was made, but the revaluation was not worth the paper on which it was written. The department merely prepared a list of what the settler had obtained; set out what it cost in 1920, and what it would cost in 1924, when certain things were reduced in price, and reduced the capital value to an infinitesimal extent. I advised the Minister to view these places in the settlement in my electorate which his department valued at £600 to £800. No man of any intelligence would value them at more than £150. Is this Bill tackling the question by remitting a few pounds in interest which the settlers have no chance of paying, and which the department has never been able to collect? There has been a heresy hunt in connection with a few men who have abandoned their blocks. Make no mistake, they were good men, but they were not able to make a living on their blocks; and the quicker the Government forget about these men the better. What basis has been adopted in making the distinction between the settlements? The Minister pointed out that it took five years before deciduous trees became a payable proposition, and therefore it was intended not to charge interest on the Stanthorpe settlement until five years after the trees were planted. If that is the basis adopted in connection with this Bill, then why, in connection with the Enoggera soldier settlements, is there a remission of rent for three to four years? It does not take a fowl three or four years to learn to lay an egg. (Laughter.) There is no basis at all. The hon. member for Fitzroy is quite right in claiming that there should be no discrimination, and I am prepared to give the hon. member an opportunity of deciding that no discrimination shall be shown. I know perfectly well that there are a couple of blocks at Beerburum and one or two blocks in the Enoggera soldier settlements in connection with which a good living is being made; but the adjoining settlers are not able to do likewise. This applies more particularly at Beerburum, because of the poor-quality land, which is not worth a cent and will grow nothing. The person who is able to make a living is to be let off the interest in the same way as the settler who has failed to make a success. If there is to be discrimination between one settlement and another, then why not make a discrimination between one settler and another?

I have introduced deputations to the Minister on this matter, but this is not a time when we should particularise, as this is a Bill dealing generally with soldier settlements. I strongly protest against this discrimination. I admit that there are men in the settlements in my own electorate who cannot pay their way, because the marketing of eggs has not been successful. I also admit that there are instances where the amount of energy which should be put into a holding is not in evidence, but many men on this and other settlements should have every consideration, and no interest should be paid by them until at least 31st December, 1926. In fact, no interest should be paid by the settlers at Beerburum until 1928. There is a moral in this. If the Government said to the settlers "We will not charge you any rent or interest until 1928," they would say, "This is a concession which will enable me to square my accounts. This is something to work for." That concession should be made to every soldier settlement in the State. The Government are giving no concessions. I cannot ascertain where this £2,000,000 has been wiped off, because up to 30th June of this year the value of the improvements written off only amounted to £80,000, and the interest written off amounted to £72,000, making the total amount written off improvements and interest £152,000.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The amount, including concessions under this Bill, is £500,000.

Mr. KERR: The Auditor-General gives different figures. It is impossible for any hon. member to examine the position and arrive at that amount. The Commonwealth Government have made a grant of £900,000 for soldier settlement in this State, but the soldier has not received the benefit of it. Through the lack of administration—I could say through misdemeanours—the sum of £177,000 has had to be wiped off soldier settlement through men abandoning their selections. The Government have taken that money from the money advanced by the Commonwealth Government instead of disbursing it to the soldier settlers to enable them to make a success of their land. That is more than the Government are conceding in rebates and interest. Some of the other States have not only given soldier settlers greater advances than this Government, but they have also made grants of freehold land.

The statement has been made that many soldiers who settled on the land were not suitable for the purpose. If some of the soldiers had obtained what they were entitled to, they would have made some of the very best settlers in Australia. If hon. members examine the position of the returned soldiers in those States where they have received not only advances but a grant of the freehold of the land, they would discover that less than 1 per cent. are in arrears. The Queensland Government have given men only the leasehold of the land and expected them to make a success of it. It is no wonder that hundreds of men left or abandoned their farms, leaving a liability on the State. Their liabilities from the inception were too great. It is not too late now for the Government to make a grant of a block of land to these soldier settlers as was done in Tasmania. It would be better for the Government to bring down a comprehensive Bill than a tiddley-winking Bill like

Mr. Kerr.]

the one we are asked to consider, and which no hon. member has had an opportunity of reading. Why, it would be better to leave the position as it is. Even now something should be done to make the Bill more comprehensive.

There are many matters that require a good deal of ventilation. I hope that, when we reach the Committee stage, the Minister will be prepared to relieve settlers in the matter of interest payments. When we reach that stage I shall go into the matter thoroughly, and it is to be hoped that the Minister will find some reasonableness in the amendments that will be proposed by hon. members of the Opposition. It is impossible to give relief to our soldier settlers, but the Government are in a position to treat those settlers more liberally than is intended by the provisions of this Bill.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*): I have listened to the Minister's introduction of this measure and also to the various speeches that have been made by hon. members on both sides of the House. If there is any person who feels a very great measure of disappointment at the failure of our soldier settlements, and who realises the necessity for some relieving measure, I am that person. I was associated with the Land Settlement Committee in Brisbane shortly after its inception. That committee was composed of men of various shades of political opinion, whose one desire and object, under that scheme, was to formulate a scheme which would be of the very greatest benefit to our returned soldiers and to the whole State of Queensland. From what I have listened to to-day, I am satisfied that, had some of the hon. members who have spoken to-day been on that committee, they would not have made such speeches as they have made to-day. (Hear, hear!) I am satisfied that, had the Premier been on that committee as chairman, as various Secretaries for Public Lands under whom we served were, he would have done exactly the same as did those Ministers. (Hear, hear!) It is all very fine to talk to-day about the failure of the land settlement of our soldiers. There are a great many people in the country who can tell you everything to-day, but we want the people who can tell us something useful the day before. (Hear, hear!) We all become very wise after the event has taken place.

As one who took a very keen interest in the settlement of our returned soldiers at Beerburum, I have to admit great disappointment at the result. That failure was not due to the land alone. In view of the knowledge we have gained since we started our system of soldier settlement in Queensland, I am quite satisfied now that probably 70 to 75 per cent. of the men placed on our lands were not suitable for that class of work. (Hear, hear!) It is not a bit of use disguising from ourselves that particular fact.

Beerburum has been mentioned during the course of this discussion. I am going to live to see the day, and other men in this Chamber are going to live to see the day, when Beerburum will be quite a thriving and prosperous settlement. I do not say it will be composed entirely of returned soldiers; but I am certain many of us will live to see the day when that will be a thriving and prosperous place. (Hear, hear!) There are 132 men with their wives and families on Beerburum to-day, and very few of those men want to leave that settlement,

[*Mr. Kerr.*

although some certainly do. It must be quite evident that, if these men do not wish to leave that settlement, there must be some inducement that causes them to remain there. We made a failure certainly of growing pineapples at Beerburum in sufficiently large quantities for the settler to make a living; but there are other things besides pineapples that can be grown. As one of the members of that Land Settlement Committee, I am prepared to accept my share of responsibility for everything that was done by that committee. (Hear, hear!) Recommendations were made to the Government from time to time, and I do not know of any recommendation ever having been turned down by the Government. Perhaps it would have been better if they had been turned down. There were two men on that committee directly representative of the soldiers. There was one man nominated as the representative of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers' Imperial League; there was another man on the committee as the representative of what was known as the Soldiers' Labour League, to see that the men got a fair deal in what was being done by that committee, and I say, without fear of successful contradiction, that no body of men could have endeavoured to do better for the soldiers than that Land Settlement Committee. The canning factory certainly has proved a very great loss to the State. It was realised by the committee that, if we were going to place a lot of men on a settlement like Beerburum to grow pineapples, it was not a fair thing that they should be absolutely dependent on the fresh fruit market when their fruit came to maturity, and therefore the committee decided to recommend that a canning factory be built in order that the surplus crop might be dealt with in a way that would give a satisfactory return to the soldier settler. The Hon. J. H. Hunter was the chairman of the Land Settlement Committee at the time, and he realised that, if the men on the settlement in the Stanthorpe district were to be successful in raising the fruit that they were put on the land to grow, it was absolutely necessary that a railway should be built to that settlement. I recollect the circumstances quite well, and Mr. Hunter had great difficulty in getting the officers of the Railway Department to conform to his idea that a very expensive railway line should not be built to the settlement. He got his way ultimately, and a railway was built to that settlement, and a fair amount of success has been attained in that direction.

I do not subscribe to the sentiment which was expressed this morning by the hon. member for Maryborough when he said that the returned soldier should be placed on an absolutely equal footing with any other person in the community in regard to these matters.

We know that these men who went away from Queensland made a great sacrifice in leaving their homes and families behind in many cases—I do not want to deal with war matters—and, if there are any individuals in the community who should have preference in any shape or form, these men should have it. It is our duty to give these men preference, if we can possibly do so. I would have liked to see the Bill go a little further than it has gone, but it is a step in the right direction. We want to give these men an opportunity to make good where there is a reasonable prospect of success; but very

great care should be exercised under the provisions of this Bill. As the hon. member for Wynnun said, if we are only going to patch the thing up, we are going to make the position worse, and will probably have to introduce a Bill in a few years in order to grant further concessions. I regret that the Bill has been sprung upon us in the closing days of the session, as it is really a most important measure. I agree with the hon. member for Fitzroy that the remission of interest should apply equally all round, and that there should be no preference given in that direction.

Mention has been made of the Mount Gravatt and Enoggera poultry settlements, and it has been said that Mount Gravatt is not in a suitable position for a poultry settlement. That may or may not be so; but what happened at Enoggera, which was said to be in a very much more favourable position than Mount Gravatt? We did not do a scrap better there than we did at Mount Gravatt. My own opinion is that the advances given to soldier settlers in connection with the rearing of poultry and those given at Beerburum were not limited to £625. Many of the settlers on those areas got up to as high as £1,000; and advances of £700, £800, and £900 were given to a number of these men to help them to succeed. Time after time in the later days before the Land Settlement Committee was disbanded the members of the committee were writing off amounts at every meeting for men who were unable to meet their engagements. I would like hon. members to bear in mind the fact that the Land Settlement Committee had the advantage of the advice of the best officers in the Department of Public Lands and the Department of Agriculture. They were also able to secure advice from outside sources, and if the soldier settlements are a failure, we are all in it. (Hear, hear!)

Mr. SIZER (*Sandgate*): I have listened to the speech of the hon. member for Windsor with a certain amount of diffidence. After hearing the speech of the Minister and that of the hon. member, I find it difficult to reconcile the two, particularly in view of the last sentence in the speech of the hon. member for Windsor, when he said that, although the Land Settlement Committee had the advice of competent officers in the Department of Public Lands and the Department of Agriculture, yet they made all those mistakes. What a wreckage there is as the result of the advice of all those responsible officers! They must take their share of the responsibility. We have yet to be told what has caused the colossal failure. I entirely disagree with the hon. member for Windsor, and have disagreed with him ever since he spoke in this strain some years ago. I have never seen eye to eye with him on this matter. I would ask him this: If the case is so satisfactory at Beerburum, why write it off? If Mount Gravatt and Enoggera settlements are going to be so successful, why this Bill?

Mr. HYNES: Why not be fair?

Mr. SIZER: That is fair. I said at the outset that I could not reconcile the statements of the Minister with those of the hon. member for Windsor. The latter says it will be all right, and the Minister says it will not, and hence this Bill. The hon. member for Windsor has always been a super-optimist on this question, probably because he was

associated with the Land Settlement Committee.

Mr. DASH: You are a wisecrack after the event.

Mr. SIZER: I am not. We were wise before the event, and I am not going to take any responsibility because an hon. member who happens to be on this side used to support the Government viewpoint against the majority of his party. That fact does not alter my opinion or the fact that we were right then and are right now. If there has been any Bill or sequence of Bills which have proved the incompetence of the Government, this certainly caps the lot; and I think it is a pity that the coping-stone of the Government's edifice of incompetence should be left to the last few days of the session. I think this Bill will write "failure" across the administration of the Government in plainer letters than any other.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You have fallen down in your prophecies quite a number of times.

Mr. SIZER: I have not the slightest doubt that this Bill can be described in a nutshell as a rebate of interest. But that is only a book entry, because the Government have not been able to collect it, and they are merely writing something off the books which they knew they could not get. From that point of view it gives no help to the settler.

Then we are going to have a writing-off of some of the principal. This is where we could do some definite good. One's natural desire is to see the soldier settlers who remain have their farms so capitalised and so relieved of obligations that they can become successful and so prove profitable to the State. In clause 3, which gives power to make rebates of capital, something could be done if the Government wished. I say that the holdings of any value should be revalued and written down to the lowest basis, so that the settlers concerned can make a profitable living from them. Nothing short of that is any good, and, if you stop short of that, you will only have to introduce another Bill later which will bring us to that point. The department will be wise if it constitutes a committee of competent authorities with a free hand to write down the capital value of the settlements as I have suggested. If that is done, some good may accrue.

Mr. O'KEEFE: Do you support writing Chillagoe down to that point?

Mr. SIZER: I say "Yes." We must face the position, and bring it down to where it can pay. That is the only thing that can be done. Anything else is only perpetuating a wrong. To ask these settlers to attempt to make a living on over-capitalised farms is unfair to the department, to Parliament, and to themselves; and we should tackle the question at once, and write down our losses, and give the settlers a chance. We know that the Government have written off £272,000. I would say that is the proverbial drop in the bucket from the point of view of making the settlements a success. Whilst the Minister may not show the big accumulated deficit next year, he knows that the loss will be there just the same, and I would prefer him to take a bold stand. I for one would uphold him if, in view of the losses which

Mr. Sizer.]

have occurred, he wrote the assets down to a minimum, and by that means we could say we have some beneficial value in a good settlement. Unless he does that, we are going to have loss of money, [4:30 p.m.] broken-hearted settlers, and no asset. The Government are not sure that they have made provision whereby the interest which will accrue after the dates mentioned will be paid. The Bill makes provision for payment of interest by instalments, which does not indicate any solution of the problem. If provision is made after all this writing-off to allow of interest being paid by instalments, then we are anticipating more hardship, and that only proves our contention that the Bill is not a solution of the problem. If in the past the soldier settlers have not been able to pay the amount of interest due, what provision is there in the Bill that will enable them to pay in the future? There is no provision which will enable them to convert hardship into success and to pay in the future. There is not the slightest doubt that at a later stage the same trouble will arise, necessitating another series of writings-down of capital and writings-off of interest, because the land has not the capacity to produce sufficient to pay the amounts due. So long as that is the case, no real success can be expected.

MR. C. J. RYAN: The soldier settlers are in the same position as other settlers.

MR. SIZER: The hon. gentleman must bear in mind that these settlers were placed on very inferior land in most cases at a very high capital cost, and, because of the disorganisation existing at the time, were compelled to pay high prices for everything. The inefficient organisation meant that prices were inflated. The prices paid for the repurchased estates were invariably too high. All those charges have been placed upon the soldier settlements.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Those difficulties are common to all settlers and are not peculiar to soldier settlers.

MR. SIZER: They are infinitely more severe in the case of soldier settlers, because you must bear in mind the terms and conditions under which they settled on the land. They came direct from the war in a state of disorganisation, and took up land—an occupation new to most of them. Their position was clearly a difficult one. Quite a number would never have gone there if they had not been encouraged by the Government. Something has to be done, but this Bill is doing very little from a practical point of view. Unless the position is tackled on the lines that I suggest, no good purpose will be served. I desire to stress the position of the man who at considerable hardship to himself has been able to meet his payments. To say that he is due for no recognition now is beyond all sense of fairness, and I intend to support an amendment which we propose to move at the Committee stage whereby practical relief will be given to those men who have met their obligations under existing conditions.

THE SPEAKER: Order! The hon. gentleman would be precluded by Standing Order 316 from moving such an amendment.

MR. SIZER: I sincerely hope that the department will make full use of its powers to increase the areas held by soldier settlers, because invariably they are now too small.

[Mr. Sizer.

That, together with the high cost of the land, the low quality of the land, and the high valuation of the improvements, has been responsible for the trouble we find those settlements in to-day.

MR. WARREN (*Murrumba*): I could not allow the opportunity to pass without offering a few remarks. Any measure that has for its object the relief of the ex-soldier will receive my support; but, after carefully reading the Bill in the short time at our disposal, I cannot see that the Government are offering any concession. The Minister has already made the concessions contained in the Bill, which is only a measure ratifying what has already been done. I certainly thought that the Minister intended to grant some of the requests of the different deputations that have waited upon him and the various conferences of soldier settlers that have been held in recent years.

Beerburum has been the centre of the discussion this afternoon, and I am, therefore, compelled to deal with this settlement. It would be wrong for me not to clear up some of the impressions which have been wrongly created. The hon. member for Fitzroy gave the impression—through no fault of his own, but through wrong information supplied to him—that Beerburum would become a prosperous settlement in the near future.

MR. HARTLEY: The hon. member for Windsor said so.

MR. WARREN: I cannot understand how the hon. member for Windsor could state that Beerburum is in a flourishing state. I am not here to condemn the Government or anyone else on this matter, but the War Council did not always live up to its responsibilities, and never carried out its obligations.

What is the use of bolstering up this Bill or the position in regard to Beerburum? This Bill is like a patch of solder on a quart pot. It is the duty of the Government to introduce a comprehensive measure which will deal effectively with soldier settlement. This Bill reminds me of a dog's tail being removed joint by joint; it is just the same tail after you take each joint off. The Minister should face the issue, instead of dealing with it in this piecemeal manner. If that had been done earlier, the present position would not have obtained.

I attended the meeting of soldier settlers at Beerburum on 23rd October last. I went there for the purpose of hearing their grievances. I have been there dozens of times. They told me that there are now sixty-seven settlers supplying fruit. The Minister has no idea how many active settlers there are there.

MR. HARTLEY: The hon. member for Windsor said there were 132 families there.

MR. WARREN: I am not responsible for the statement of the hon. member for Windsor. He has not been at the settlement since I have been there. I have been there regularly, and, unfortunately, I have observed the settlement dying. The hon. member who stated that he was looking to wonderful results from Beerburum in the near future was altogether too optimistic. He stated that he was going to live to see those results. If so, he is going to live to be as old as Methuselah, and will have no hope of ever entering heaven. (Laughter.) He will be

here at least 900 years if he intends to wait until the soil becomes good.

The trouble with Beerburrum is that the bulk of the land does not contain sufficient nourishment to sustain plant life. The Government sent men to test that country, and those people scooped a little earth from the top. The real test was that made by the settlers, and that test has proved the Beerburrum settlement to contain the poorest land that it is possible to find. The unfortunate thing is that the Government did not face the situation when they found that out. The present Premier realised the responsibility, and looked at the matter in a bigger way. His method was rather a brutal one, I admit, but it was better to act in that manner than to encourage those men to continue on the land and to break their hearts. I object to the fact that the Premier did not keep his promise. He should have put those men on better lands. There were good farmers amongst those settlers. It is all very well to talk loosely, and say that they were all "crooks."

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Some of them were offered land in the Upper Burnett district, and did not take it.

Mr. WARREN: I do not say that I would go on the Upper Burnett lands. I do not wish to condemn that country, as I do not know anything about it; but those men were badly bitten on the Beerburrum country. They were so ill-used there that they are not likely to be good settlers on any other land. It is the duty of the Government to give them a try-out, and to find them good land. It is all very well for the late Secretary for Public Lands, the present Premier, to say that the Government could not get land. The committee the hon. gentleman sent around to examine the settlement said that so many of those men were placed on other lands. Only about fifteen were taken out of about seventy. The hon. gentleman did not put the machinery in operation to shift all those men, and that is why he is deserving of blame. Any man in a responsible position who fails to keep his promise fails in the most important obligation that is allotted to man. I was at the Beerburrum settlement on the 23rd of last month, when the settlers passed several reasonable resolutions. I shall show how lightly the Premier treated those resolutions. They were given to me to present to the Premier, and the hon. gentleman stood there and deliberately tore them into pieces before me. He did that because a man named McDermott had signed them, and because he was annoyed with McDermott. I do not know that the man is in any way a revolutionary. He certainly did say that it was time the coat was taken off so far as the Government were concerned—and by the same token he is a Labour man. I certainly did not hear him say anything of a revolutionary character.

Mr. COLLINS: Cromwell was a revolutionary, and they have erected a statue to his memory in the House of Commons.

Mr. WARREN: If a man is a revolutionary, the Government should take steps to deal with him. I do not stand here apologising for someone who is out to make revolution; but because those resolutions were signed by McDermott, the Premier, like a great schoolboy, tore them up in my presence. It is a scandalous shame when the

Premier of a great State like Queensland will do a thing of that description. The people of Beerburrum have their rights. I am not going to argue as to whether some other settlers have greater rights than the Beerburrum settlers, but I do say that, with the exception of a few places round Tibrogagan and Elimbah, there is no settler in that area who is making a living.

Mr. COLLINS: What do you suggest?

Mr. WARREN: I would suggest that a commission composed of men with sympathy and business ability from both sides of the House be appointed to work out this problem.

Mr. HARTLEY: Do you say that there is no one on Beerburrum "making a do" of it?

Mr. WARREN: I am sorry if I cannot speak good enough English for the hon. member to understand. I have just said that there are some men around Tibrogagan and towards Elimbah who have made good. I do not want to state a false case. I want the thing cleaned up; but, taking the settlement as a whole, you could make cement out of the soil. There is not sufficient soil in the sand to sustain plant life. The medium land has never contained sufficient plant food to sustain a good healthy plant. If the men at Beerburrum on the land that is any good had received intelligent assistance in the first place, we would not have had the failure that has taken place. The Department of Agriculture should have taken control, and many of the mistakes could have been remedied. But now it is impossible for these men to carry on. When there are any concessions being made, why not give them to the ex-soldier? I am not pleading for somebody who is a "crook." I do not believe the story about a lot of "crooks." I suppose there is a percentage of men in every walk of life who are crooked, but there is no greater percentage of "crooks" at Beerburrum than there is anywhere else, and it is wrong for anyone to attempt to make out that there is.

My reason for moving the amendment at the initial stage was to try to broaden the Bill to allow members not only to make suggestions but to move amendments so that we could remove a great injustice. It is no good weeping and whining; we want to clear it up. It is no good talking about the amount of money lost and who is going to lose most of it. It is a sorry thing to lose millions of money, and we do not like to see millions of pounds lost; but the loss has to be faced, and we can overcome all the difficulties so far as the money is concerned. But the broken-hearted, knocked-out human element cannot be put right in that way; and the sooner the Government start to mend the human element and not patch up an arrangement that has been bad from the start the better it will be for the soldier settlement. The sooner the Government are led to see that it is necessary to have a general survey by someone outside the department—not a commission composed of officers of the department—the better.

I do not wish to say anything against the officers of the department, because the committee which was appointed was hobbled and had not a chance of going comprehensively into the matter. They went out with certain instructions to the effect that they had to ascertain the difference between the

Mr. Warren.]

value of the improvements at the start and the improvements at the time of inspection. They had not to deal with the question of the over-capitalisation of the land or with making the venture a commercial proposition. They were not given a free hand to deal with the matter. It is time the Government faced the position and settled the matter, and not let it be hung up year after year.

I hope the Minister will carry out the promise of his predecessor and see that those men who wish to get away from the settlements are allowed to do so. There were nineteen men at the meeting. They did not say they wanted to get away, but it is enough for me if they want to leave Beerburum. I know these men well, and I respect the great majority of them. I am not using carping criticism this afternoon, but looking at the matter from the farmer's point of view, and I say that from the farmer's point of view Beerburum is not possible.

Mr. PETERSON (*Normanby*): I desire to ask the Minister for some information with regard to the forfeited selections. I understand that the department has made them available to civilians from the other side of the world, who have taken up the areas on the inflated values. I can quite understand that we are going to have a very rough time if these benefits are going to be given to the soldiers while those who have purchased the selections are not going to get the benefit of the reduction of the inflated prices which ruled during the war period. I do not know whether the Minister has overlooked that point. We are going to have a good deal of trouble in that regard, and I hope the Minister will make provision for the giving of concessions to civilians who have purchased land from soldier settlers.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That would apply to all land settlement.

Mr. PETERSON: No; because it deals with soldier settlements where the assets as fixed by the department have been divided up. In the cases I am speaking of the assets were on the high side. Some of these men have done a lot of work, but have got no return owing to dry seasons, and they see their neighbours' values reduced while they have to pay at a higher rate.

With regard to the Beerburum settlement, I was one of those members who in the early stages went up to visit that place. I am not going to blame the Government for selecting Beerburum or any other soldier settlement; but I am going to blame them to a certain extent for having relied too much on the advice of Mr. Rose at that time.

Mr. COLLINS: He was supposed to be a practical farmer.

Mr. PETERSON: I know he was. I am not wholly blaming the Government for it. All that time the Government relied too much on the so-called experts, and the sooner those experts are passed out the better for the farmers.

Mr. COLLINS: Hear, hear!

Mr. PETERSON: We have a position at Beerburum similar to what there is everywhere else. I travelled around with Mr. Rose at the inception of the scheme. I asked him to go to Yeppoon, where they had magnificent pineapples growing. I also

told him about the Gracemere district, where there are also magnificent pineapple lands. They have grown pineapples there for the last thirty years on land that has never been fertilised. At Beerburum, they had to use fertilisers in the very first year of cultivation, and they have had to buy fertilisers ever since, with the result that the bulk of the farmers' profits has gone in buying fertilisers. This is the settlement which some of the officers of the Lands Department tried to justify as an ideal settlement. I put the blame on Mr. Rose. Unfortunately, the Government were misled by that expert, the same as other Governments have been misled by experts.

I would like to know how the Minister justifies the differentiation in the Bill between the different settlers. Are not all these settlers soldiers? Why should one have the privilege of having his interest written off till 1927, and another only till 1924? The settler at Ridglands is a settler in the same sense as the settler at Beerburum; yet the settler at Beerburum does not commence to pay interest until 1928, whereas the Ridglands settler commences in 1925. Three years' interest is a tremendous difference.

Some hon. members on this side have said that the Bill does not give the settlers much. All I can say about that is that the mere fact that the Government are writing off the interest, even till the end of 1924, must give some satisfaction. If I owe a couple of hundred pounds to a grocer for foodstuffs and he wipes off that debt and writes off the interest, I know that I am free; and, as member for Normanby, I am thankful for the concession which has been given. At the same time, whilst the Government are so generous as to give the Beerburum settler till the end of 1927, I cannot see why they should not put the Ridglands settler on the same basis. I do not know whether the Minister thinks he can explain it, but I shall find it very hard to explain to the Ridglands settlers why they are to be three years worse off than other settlers.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Do you think they should all be put back to 1924?

Mr. PETERSON: I am not asking that they should all be put back to 1924. I am only asking the Minister to be as generous to the Ridglands settler as to the Beerburum settler.

I notice that there is a provision that the Minister shall be the sole arbiter—of course, on the advice of his officers—as to whether any amounts shall be wiped off. I think that is a bad principle—not that I distrust the Minister, because I believe that he will do a fair thing if it comes before him, but because it is a bad thing to give any Minister sole power. I think it should be left to the Land Court or some other body free from political control altogether.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The Land Court cannot deal with the Atherton settlement.

Mr. PETERSON: Probably it cannot, but by Act of Parliament we could give it power to do so. As I said at an earlier stage, unfortunately this Bill will only benefit the few, whereas two years ago it would have helped the many; but in respect of those whom it does affect we are thankful for small mercies. I sincerely trust the Minister will accept the amendments in Committee—not

[*Mr. Warren.*]

moved for the purpose of obstructing the Bill or embarrassing the Government, but rather to assist the Government to retain on the settlements those who have stayed there so long, and give them a fair deal.

Mr. DEACON (*Cunningham*): There are one or two things in the Bill I am pleased with, but I think it should have been introduced some years ago. It gives the Minister some authority to deal with certain matters and write off part of the capital. I am not going to follow up the question of where the blame for the failure of the settlements should be put. I am not going to attempt to blame anybody in particular—we have heard a plea of "guilty" from one on this side of the House. The main thing is to see what we can do now.

The best thing about the Bill is the power of the Minister to write off arrears of interest, to write down capital, and to increase areas. When speaking this morning the Premier referred to the failure of some of the settlers on Cecil Plains, and pointed out

[5 p.m.] that other settlers could have made a success of those settlements, instancing that, if the hon. member for Dalby had those areas, he would make them pay. Anybody who proceeded on the same lines as the hon. member for Dalby could make them pay. If you gave the areas on Cecil Plains to a sheep man at a price which it was worth and with a sufficient acreage, he would be able to run sheep successfully. That is what the Premier does not understand, and what his officers do not seem to grasp. The grass value of good land like Cecil Plains is equal to the agricultural value of the land. In fact, it is worth a little more as grass land than agricultural land, and should have been considered as such. The areas were cut up into 640 acres. That would be all right if it were agricultural land, but, with the exception of some parts, it is not first-class agricultural land. The areas were too small. If they had been made sufficiently large to permit of the conduct of a sheep and farming area, then many settlers would have been more successful. The Minister has power to increase the areas. I notice that certain areas will be falling into the hands of the department, and I also know that the Minister has power to add those areas to existing areas. It would be a very fine move if he did that, thereby making the area sufficiently large to give the settlers a successful start, even with the present valuations.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not dealing with the Bill, which is to amend an Act in certain particulars. I hope he will confine his remarks to the Bill.

Mr. DEACON: These particulars are contained in the Bill, Mr. Speaker. The Minister can increase or alter areas, notwithstanding anything contained in any other Act of Parliament. That is one of the good points that I see in the Bill. In my electorate the areas for soldier settlers were made altogether too small. Blocks that were sufficiently large for only one settler were subdivided into four areas. When I came into this House cases were brought under my notice where settlers could make a success with areas sufficiently large. I brought one or two cases under the notice of the Minister at the time, but he pointed out that he had no power to add forfeited areas to the areas of the remaining settlers.

That difficulty is now removed, but it is a pity it has come along so late.

Suggestions have been made that arrears of interest on capital will be written off in all cases. I do not agree with that, because there are cases where land has been bought at a reasonable price, where the soldier settler knew what he was doing, exercised his own discretion, and has been successful. You cannot write down equally all round. In cases where the soldier has had a fair deal there is no necessity for the Minister to intervene; but there is something against nearly all soldier settlements which has helped to make them a failure.

One cause for the failures lies in the fact that neither the soldier nor the man advising him knew anything about land. The advice of the officer of the department also was not what it should have been. The settlements were over-capitalised, not because the improvements placed upon them were unnecessary, but because the improvements erected upon them and the clearing done cost too much at the time. The cost of building material was high. Then the stock market at the time the soldiers were settled was too high. Stock was bought on a high-priced market, and almost immediately after the soldiers bought the market started to fall. Prices for all produce also fell. We cannot blame the settler for all the loss that has taken place, as much of it was due to factors entirely beyond the control of himself or the Government. I know of cases where soldiers became involved in that way.

I have in mind one case where a man, fully knowing what he was doing, purchased a piece of good land, and then used his credit to the utmost to buy horses, cattle, and implements. All his purchases were made when the market was high, and he immediately afterwards had to face a falling market. That man has plodded on ever since and paid his way, but it has meant to him a tremendous cost in labour and effort. He should secure relief under this Bill. He was in the same position as many other settlers; but he could not blame the Government or the War Council for the losses which got him down and kept him down, as they were beyond the control of either, and he knew what he was doing. His was simply a case of hardship due to the market going to pieces. He has paid the whole of his interest bill, and has not a single shilling—only the land and a big debt. That man is entitled to sympathetic consideration.

The Minister has the power under this Bill to write down capital, but, if that power is not clearly expressed enabling him to exercise it in such cases then, when the Bill reaches the Committee stage, that power should be plainly stated. All these things should be taken into consideration. It was impossible to avoid a lot of the losses that have been sustained. In most cases the men who did the best were those who went out on their own, trusted to their own judgment, and confined their attention to matters about which they knew something.

When we get into Committee our main duty will be to make the Bill more effective than it is. There are some good points about it, but we want something better. We want the Minister to have almost absolute power to deal with cases as they occur—power which at present may not be contained in the Bill.

Mr. Deacon.]

Mr. KELSO (*Nundah*): I desire to enter my protest against the late receipt of the Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: A very thin protest. You waited about four hours, without any Bill at all.

Mr. KELSO: When we discussed the Bill this morning we were discussing general principles. Now we are endeavouring to find out exactly what are the principles contained in the Bill. We are slowly acquiring that knowledge, and I am disappointed with it. I said this morning that I am concerned with soldier settlements generally, but I am particularly concerned with the Highlands soldier settlement. It is unfair that there should be such differentiation as is manifested in the Bill. It is a bad principle, and one with which I do not agree. I am not jealous of anything that the Beerburum settlers are to receive. I see that their interest is to be wiped off until 1st January, 1927. Thereafter they are to be charged interest upon what the Minister considers to be a fair capital value. That is only fair; but similar treatment should be meted out to the Highlands soldier settlement.

The Beerburum settlers have loomed largely in the public eye—more so than some of the other settlements. The Beerburum settlers have kicked pretty hard; they have received a lot of publicity; and, although they may not have received much up to the present, because of that publicity the Minister now extends special consideration to them. I claim that the other soldier settlements—Highlands, Mount Gravatt, Bald Hills, and so on—should be treated on a similar basis. I am absolutely staggered at the great heart that these settlers have shown in remaining on their settlements. They have hung on for years in the hope that some relief will be given them in the future. I have advised these men not to do anything rash—not to get excited about it, as the time must come when these matters must come under serious review. They have taken my advice in most cases, and have been reasonable in the matter, looking forward to the day when a fair deal will be given them. But this Bill is only perpetuating the system which has been in operation for some years. Some little relief is to be given by way of a small reduction of the capital debt and a certain amount of interest up to 1st January, 1926, but that is only a drop in the bucket. The system adopted was absolutely wrong. The valuation was absolutely absurd, and these men since that time have been dissatisfied, and nothing will satisfy them unless they can get the debt against their properties written down to what they consider to be a reasonable market value.

Mr. CARTER: And some of them would still be dissatisfied.

Mr. KELSO: The hon. member is probably one of those men who have no sympathy with the returned soldier. On this side of the House we have sympathy.

Mr. CARTER: Like you had during the war.

Mr. KELSO: We realise that there are some men on the other side who also take the same view, and the small section that does not take that view—well, we can afford to ignore them.

Mr. CARTER: You never gave a shilling towards it.

[*Mr. Kelso.*

Mr. KELSO: I am referring to something far and away above the ideas of the hon. member. This Bill will not be a solution of the difficulty. The Minister will be well advised not to leave it to the officers who dealt with this matter before, but to leave it to a commission. I am not talking about a commission of experts. We can cut the experts out. I refer to a commission on which all the varied interests of the different soldier settlements will be represented. I would have a representative from each soldier settlement in Queensland. They could review the difficulties of each particular settlement and put them before the commission, which would thus be enabled to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion far better than somebody who has only a theoretical idea of the position and acts in a purely mechanical way. I know the late Secretary for Public Lands gave a great deal of attention to this matter and that he would like to see a solution of this difficulty, but the Government do not go far enough. When the Bill is in Committee I hope the Minister will give consideration to a proposal to appoint a commission to go into the whole matter of soldier settlements. No Minister can visit the whole of the soldier settlements. He must take the advice of his responsible officers.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Of experts.

Mr. KELSO: I do not know that they are experts. They are departmental officials, and they look on this matter from a certain angle. Unfortunately—it is no use mincing matters—the particular angle from which these departmental officers look at the matter does not suit the soldiers, and, unless the soldiers are satisfied, the thing will never be settled.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must connect his remarks with the principles of the Bill.

Mr. KELSO: I was connecting my remarks with the principles of the Bill, under which the Minister will have power to reduce the capital indebtedness, and I was pointing out that there is a way of arriving at that. The matter is in the hands of the Minister, subject to the report of departmental officers. That method has been tried in the past, but it has been a failure, and the returned soldiers are not satisfied. We should find some other method, and that method has been suggested from this side, and should be taken into consideration. We have the opportunity of satisfying these men. I know that it is impossible to satisfy every man, but we should aim at the greatest good for the greatest number, and satisfy the majority of the settlers, and do away with the unrest that exists at the present time.

I do not think anyone will say that the soldiers who came here the other day as a deputation to the Minister, many of whom had walked long distances, did so for the purpose of making a disturbance. They have genuine grievances, and most of them are not versed in city ways of doing business; and naturally they thought that their own business was of paramount importance, even exceeding that of Parliament. They were told that the Minister was engaged in the House on his departmental Estimates and could not see them; but they could not look at the matter from the Minister's point of view, and we must forgive them for the

attitude they took up. There is deep-seated dissatisfaction behind all this, and we must do our best to meet these men. A commission of representatives from the different soldier settlements could go into the merits of each particular case and arrive at a better settlement than we could get by leaving it to departmental officers to make a report to the Minister on which the hon. gentleman would come to a decision. I hope the Minister will be reasonable in the matter. The Government asked for suggestions from hon. members on this side, and I have given one which I think will go a long way towards solving this very important matter. I hope that our suggestions will receive serious consideration in Committee.

Mr. NOTT (*Stanley*): I am sure that every hon. member will realise that this Bill is one which is long overdue. Years ago we stated what would happen. As the hon. member for Burnett said, even in 1917, when this legislation was first introduced, there were opinions voiced from this side to the effect that the methods which were being adopted courted nothing but failure. Right from 1917 to the present time we have ample illustration of the fact that the various soldier settlements have been dreadful disasters.

During the debate hon. members on both sides have blamed various individuals for the position which soldier settlements have got into. The hon. member for Normanby said that a great deal of the blame should be attached to an expert by the name of Mr. Rose. The hon. member for Windsor stated that he was prepared to bear his share of the blame in regard to some of the soldier settlements; but, notwithstanding that, the blame with regard to the matter is attributable to the present Government. They have seen the position going from bad to worse from 1917 till the present day, yet they have done nothing, or very little, to rectify it. There is no doubt that what is wanted now is not this Bill but a comprehensive measure which will go right to the root of the matter, and once for all settle the question of soldier settlement. This Bill will enable the settlers to carry on for a little while. It will be a sort of stop-gap, but at no very distant date another amending Bill will be required to render further assistance. The Government would be well advised if they made one bite at the cherry, and brought in a measure to put the whole thing on a sound foundation at once. Quite a number of losses will have to be written off, and it would be far better for them to take the matter in hand at once.

It has been said that many of the men who were put on these farming propositions were unsuitable. In any industrial undertaking or any other calling a proportion of the men will always be unsuitable, and, if you go into statistics, you will find that in every class of men very few can be really classed as successful in any undertaking. Many of these soldier settlers on arriving in Queensland again from the war were driven to make the most of the openings offering. Some of them were unfortunately unable to get back into the industries in which they had worked before the war, and it was thought that their experiences at the war were such that it would be better for them to take on an outdoor life rather than go into offices. Consequently, great numbers

of them began farming without experience because they hoped for success. They were quite justified in doing so, because every day throughout the country you will find men in various industrial undertakings and farming pursuits making successes of their enterprises although they have had no experience, much to the surprise of everybody. The human element comes into the problem every time, and nobody can say what man will and what man will not make a successful farmer.

I suppose that the most successful settlement is at Coominya, in my electorate. On different occasions I took the trouble to visit all the farms there and see the work the men were endeavouring to do. Unfortunately, they had no hope of doing the least bit of good. Of the seventy or eighty men who worked there for years—and most of them worked particularly hard—I do not think there were more than a few of whom you could say that they were not workers and did not try their best to make a success of their undertakings. In fact, the surprise to me was that they should hang on there so long, striving and striving to make the best of it. When a number of them were removed to other areas they had to leave their wives and children there because they had not such clothes that they could travel on the railways. Certain people in the Stanley electorate had to collect clothes so that the wives and children of some of them could clothe themselves and be allowed to travel on the railways, and thus join their husbands in other localities.

[5.30 p.m.]

A good deal has been said this afternoon to the effect that some of the areas on which the settlers were put were too small. The areas provided on the Coominya settlement were not an asset to the soldier settlers, but were really a liability; for the larger the area of land of the same quality in that district the greater the liability, and not the greater the asset. At first the soldier settlers were to make their fortunes growing grapes, then oranges, and eventually cotton; but in the meantime four years had elapsed. Then they were told that they would have to manure their land. I paid a visit to the settlement to view one or two of the farms, and the supervisor informed me that manures were being sent up to manure the land. I inquired as to what manures were being sent up and whether the correct manures were to be used. The supervisor had to admit that he did not know anything about the soil and that it had never been analysed to that date. I asked him to refrain from having the manures sent along and penalising the soldier settlers to the extent of the cost of that manure, and to wait until the soil had been analysed. An officer was despatched from the Department of Agriculture, and soil was taken for analysis, with the result that the chemist reported that it was the poorest soil he had ever examined in Queensland, and that it was impossible to grow more than one commercial crop, and he advised the abandonment of the settlement forthwith. If that chemist had been sent along four years previously to examine the soil, there would have been no settlement on the area at all. There are not many men left on Coominya at the present time. The worst feature is that the men were charged up to £25 an acre for clearing, or they were allowed to clear their own land.

Mr. Nott.]

The work they carried out and the improvements they effected might have been an asset to people who came afterwards if there was any possibility of making good with the land. If the land was of good quality, the improvements would be of some use; but unfortunately for the most part the land in that area is of such a quality that the whole of the money expended must be written off as a dead loss. At the present time the soldier settlers have a perpetual leasehold tenure. One hon. member on the other side said this afternoon that the soldier settlers were particularly glad they had a perpetual leasehold tenure instead of a freehold tenure, explaining that a freehold tenure would be more expensive than a perpetual leasehold tenure.

Mr. FERRICKS: There is no better title than a leasehold tenure.

Mr. NOTT: Whereas to-day the land under perpetual leasehold tenure is valued at 37s. 6d. an acre, freehold agricultural farms in 1913-14 were valued at 18s. an acre. That was at a time when there was any amount of good land, whereas to-day all the good land has been taken up, and settlers must be satisfied with poorer land. The department is charging the settlers a greater amount for land which is inferior from the point of view of the settlers. If that is so, there is this feature: Previously when good land was opened to selection, the average area taken up under a freehold tenure was 516 acres per man, whereas the average area taken up during the past eleven years under a perpetual leasehold tenure amounts to 475 acres per man. It cannot be expected that men on inferior land will make a living off an area of inferior land which is less than the average area of good freehold land held in other districts.

The sooner the Government go a step further than this Bill proposes to do and write down the capital value of holdings held by soldiers to a bedrock value, and improve the tenure under which the land is held, the better it will be for the soldier settlers and for everyone else in Queensland. Men living on soldier settlements near railway lines like to look forward to the time when that land will be their own. I only hope the value of these perpetual leaseholds held by soldier settlers will be written down very considerably. It would be a good thing for Queensland if the value was written off altogether, and the settlers given a grant of the land and permitted to make a new start.

Mr. W. COOPER (*Rosewood*): The hon. member for Stanley has referred to the Coominya soldier settlement, and has condemned the Government for something which he believes to be absolutely wrong. I know something about the inception of that settlement, and I desire to say, without fear of contradiction, that the Government were not responsible for the soldiers settling at Coominya.

Mr. NOTT: They were.

Mr. W. COOPER: They were not responsible.

Mr. NOTT: The last word is always with the Government.

Mr. W. COOPER: The citizens of Coominya wrote to me seeking my assistance to establish a soldier settlement at that centre, and, to the best of my knowledge, I refused

point blank to have anything to do with it. I pointed out to those citizens that the land was not fit for a soldier settlement. I went so far as to visit the Commonwealth Returned Soldiers' Land Settlement Committee and tell them that it did not matter what they did with the land at Coominya—that, if they settled any soldiers there, they would be off it in twelve months. My forecast was correct.

Mr. NOTT: It took the Government four years to find out that the land was unsuitable.

Mr. W. COOPER: Mr. Gutteridge and Mr. Watson sold the land to the Commonwealth Returned Soldiers' Land Settlement Committee, and the purchase of the land had nothing to do with this Government or with the then Secretary for Public Lands, the late Mr. Coyne. The hon. member for Windsor was then Leader of the Opposition and a member of that committee. He advocated the purchase of the Coominya soldier settlement.

Mr. WARREN: Who paid the money?

Mr. W. COOPER: The Commonwealth Government paid for the land. I suggested at the time to Mr. Parker, the secretary of the committee, that it would be infinitely better to resume Mr. Cotton's Hidden Vale Station or Mr. Mort's station in my electorate for a soldier settlement.

If these men had been given 150 acres of land, twenty cows—fifteen in full profit and five dry—if a dairy had been erected and also a residence, it would not have cost nearly as much to resume that land at £10 to £12 an acre as it did to resume the Coominya settlement. I contended that at the time. I contended that it did not matter what was done, Coominya would not grow grapes or any other fruit. If Hidden Vale had been bought at £12 an acre and settlers placed on that land, they would have had a return for their labour within a month after being placed there.

Yet we find hon. members opposite condemning the Government! The Government were not responsible for settling those men on the Coominya settlement. It was the Commonwealth Returned Soldiers' Land Settlement Committee which was responsible. That committee paid 30s. an acre for the Coominya land—land that would not feed a billy-goat. To-day you cannot find more than five returned soldiers on the Coominya lands. Anyone with any experience of agricultural lands knows very well that, whether the land be at Beerburrum or at Coominya, no man can start at zero and make a living from fruitgrowing. If you start to grow pineapples, it takes three years before you receive any return for your labour. Yet we had men who were friends of that committee selling land to these people at from 30s. to 37s. an acre—land which, in my opinion, was not worth 5s. an acre! Those men made the profit, and the returned soldiers reaped nothing but hard work. Every acre of land cleared at Coominya cost from 25s. to £15 and £16 an acre to clear. Of course, the returned soldier did not care how much it cost so long as he received a return for his labour. The major portion of the Coominya land has mahogany on it, and, when you clear mahogany, within three months that land has as much undergrowth on as was previously the case. I am quite satisfied that the hon. member for Stanley is trying

[*Mr. Nott.*]

to put something over this Government. The man who sold that land to the Land Settlement Committee, at the election in 1923 threatened me with an action because, when a question was asked of me as to who bought the Coominya soldier settlement for the Government, I said, "Ask the man who sold it." That was the man who was responsible for selling the land to the Land Settlement Committee, and he received a huge benefit for himself at the expense of the returned soldiers, and, at the same time, was posing as one of the great loyalists in this community.

Mr. NOTT: Who was that?

Mr. W. COOPER: Mr. Watson, and the hon. member knows that Mr. Gutteridge was one of the men who recommended it, and the committee the hon. member for Stanley is backing up were the men who bought it at the expense of the returned soldier—the man who fought for the freedom of this country. Ask the hon. member for Stanley how many men are there now. He is conversant with the conditions, and to-day he is trying to put something over this Government for which he was responsible. The hon. member for Stanley, Mr. Gutteridge, Mr. Watson, and the hon. member for Windsor, who was one of the committee which recommended the purchase of that land, are the men who are responsible for the failure at Coominya. Now the hon. member for Stanley has the effrontery to stand up here to-day and condemn this Government. It is a deplorable state of affairs when a man will stand up in this Chamber and have the audacity to try and place the onus and the odium on this Government of the failure of Coominya. What of the men who advocated the purchase of Coominya, when anyone who had any knowledge at all of agriculture or fruit-growing must have known it would be a failure? Are we going to tolerate this sort of thing? The hypocrisy of hon. members opposite is intolerable in any Parliament in Australia.

Mr. G. P. BARNES (*Warnick*): I object to this important question being considered and decided just on the spur of the moment. We have only to remember that the advantage offered is a huge one, and we have to consider the conditions that are to be unravelled. I suppose few tangles are greater than the tangle associated with soldier settlement, and we consider that there should be a survey of the whole conditions that exist and did exist from the commencement. Huge blunders have been made. But what led to the making of those blunders was the return of a vast number of soldiers at a given period.

Some scheme had to be evolved in order to meet the needs of these men who did such great service abroad. They had to get employment, and action was taken with the idea of settling them on the land. Unfortunately a large number of them had no experience on the land, but they agreed to accept the offers made by the Commonwealth and State Governments, and they became farmers, orchardists, poultry farmers, and so on. We really attempted to put round pegs into square holes all along the line, and the failure has been due to that. We are now reaping the disadvantage resulting from what we did.

Something had to be done for these men, and the country impulsively prescribed a certain course. It is impossible to unravel the complicated conditions extending over so many years, and which have been caused by the extraordinary circumstances which prevailed, in a single night, when this Bill is thrown before us. The records of the House will confirm my statement when I say that all along I have expressed the opinion that a mistake would be made in offering too great inducements to our returned soldiers to go on the land. If we had subsidised the efforts of these men in suitable directions, we should have achieved success. If we had given a man the opportunity of making his property freehold and said, "You put so much into this, and we will do so much for you," we would have achieved wonderful success; but we entered on a course entirely different to that, as a result of which we are reaping the conditions which prevail to-day.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Are you stonewalling?

Mr. G. P. BARNES. I am not stonewalling the Bill, I am expressing my serious conviction as to what is the only wise course to adopt in connection with this matter. If we want finality in the business, the wise thing to do would be to appoint a commission to go thoroughly into the matter. Nothing of any value will be effected unless we go into the matter de novo, and come to an understanding with every individual settler and start them all afresh if they are willing to remain. We should place our views before the men, and, if they are willing to subscribe to the conditions we lay down, we should enable them to throw their energies into the work with a view to making their land freehold. This Bill, which to my mind is only patchwork, will achieve something for the time being only, and the position will have to be rectified in the future. We desire that the men on the land should be successful; but it is unwise for us to attempt to do everything for them in order to secure that end. Men will succeed if we give them a degree of generous assistance, but we have not gone on those lines. Everything has been against us in connection with soldier settlement.

Hon. members have referred to the extreme costs of all commodities. Beerburum and the settlement in the Stanthorpe district have been referred to in this connection. In the Stanthorpe district land cost from £20 to £25 an acre to clear, and, when cleared, it was worth £6 an acre. I believe it cost £40 an acre to clear the land at Beerburum. If a man cleared 5 acres of land at a cost of £40 an acre, it would make a tremendous hole in his £625. The majority of men desire a home of some kind; there was fencing to be done and other things; and, before they were able to look round, they had reached their limit of £625.

The PREMIER: Some of them did not even pay for the clearing.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: That shows that the oversight was lacking in some way. There is no doubt that some of the trouble was due to the upset which the war itself had brought about. We are all well aware of the effect it had on some people, and this was a kind of safety valve.

The PREMIER: Hear, hear!

Mr. G. P. Barnes.]

Mr. G. P. BARNES: That was the position, if I am able to size up the conditions of life correctly, and we have to pay for it to-day; but we are not facing the position as we should. This Bill only marks another stage of the difficulty which will still remain with us. It should be faced now, and the men should be asked whether they are ready to subscribe to it. Certainly it has been said here to-day that a conference has taken place with those most concerned, and the Minister indicated in his speech that the Bill is a result. With all due deference to the men themselves, the hon. gentleman may have seized the opportunity to make some arrangement; but I still say most emphatically that this is not going to end the business, and the Government would be acting wisely if, instead of tinkering with it in this way—and tinkering may be unwise where a couple of millions of pounds of money are involved—they dealt with the whole matter once and for all. The difficulty will be with us when we have passed this Bill and the soldiers have for the time being accepted it. Further and broader and deeper, final consideration should be given to the question, and the Commonwealth and all the States, if you like, should be asked to join in consideration of the right and wise way in which this soldier settlement difficulty can be settled once and for all.

The PREMIER: Our difficulty is nothing compared with that of the other States, who have spent millions.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: I believe that is so. I have read about the difficulties in the other States, but we have first to meet our own difficulties, and I am not quite sure that the Premier himself and his Cabinet are satisfied that this is going to end the matter. My contention is that it would be far better to withdraw the Bill for the time being, indigested as it is. Seeing that it has nothing to do with party politics and we are all deeply and widely interested in this matter, would it be unwise if a committee of members of both sides of the Chamber endeavoured to find some solution of one of the greatest problems we have to deal with? We want to bring about rest among our people, and we can only do that by enabling them to succeed in the callings they have chosen.

Apart altogether from the extraordinary cost of clearing and the absorption of the £625 advance in expenses to which I have referred, who would have thought ten years ago that the fine, promising industry in the Stanthorpe district was going to be wiped out by the fruit fly?

With the best possible intentions, many things were suggested and the idea hit upon land settlement, but unfortunately [7 p.m.] to a large extent the carrying out of that purpose miscarried, and added to that are mistakes which perhaps could have been averted to a large extent. The greatest mistake made, and that which concerns us to-day, was the fact that the class of land selected was not of such a character as to ensure success and satisfaction to the settlers. I have been brought face to face with the character of some of these men in my own employ. They went to the war, and those who were fortunate enough to return resumed their positions which were retained for them; but eventually they found themselves unfitted to take up that task in life, and in their restlessness

hit upon the idea of going on the land. In one instance a young fellow who found his way down to the city succeeded, but in the bulk of other instances the young fellows who took upon themselves the task of going upon the land came to grief. I am stating only instances that have come under my own observation. The lads went out to the war and came back and went on the land; but, as a result of war strain, found themselves unnerved and quite unfitted to take up land settlement. That was found to be the difficulty with the great majority of the men who accepted positions in connection with country life.

These difficulties were added to in one direction and another. I suppose that from the climatic point of view we have not in all our experience passed through such seasons as we have been passing through during past years, and these soldier settlers also had to contend with those difficulties. To a very large extent the experiment has proved a very big failure, and it is on that score that I reiterate, on account of what has taken place and the general conditions that exist, that it would be extremely wise to go into matters very carefully, and come to a conclusion which might be helpful. The question that presses upon me to a very large extent is the differentiation that is to take place.

Some men have put their very best into the scheme, and have succeeded to a partial extent. Under the Bill those men will be ignored. It seems to me that the principle "To him that hath shall be given" should certainly apply in this connection. Some consideration in some direction—possibly in the writing-off of part of the capital indebtedness—should be made to those who have made good when consideration is being given to the men who have failed.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE (*Oxley*): Personally, I very much regret that a very important measure of this nature should have been left to the tail-end of the session when we had plenty of time in the earlier stages, if the business had been so ordered, to give proper consideration to such a Bill. This Bill will involve some thousands of returned men, and, when one considers that some £2,000,000 of loan money is at stake, and that, according to the last report of the Auditor-General, we had already written off some £339,000 prior to the introduction of this measure, it surely indicates—apart from the happiness of the men concerned—that we should give very careful consideration to a measure of this nature. It is calamitous that Queensland, which was so extraordinarily favoured in regard to soldier settlement, should have made such a terrible failure of it. I say extraordinarily favoured, because what better opportunity could we of all the States who are wanting settlers—we are loudly proclaiming our need for them now—have had than the returned soldier who, as the hon. member for Warwick has just pointed out, had come back from the war with all his old ideas upset and disturbed, and naturally his inclination led him towards the vast spaces of the land? Here we had the spaces on which to settle our soldiers. There were no expensive estates to acquire or resume. Therefore, we were favourably placed to give this matter successful consideration and make an example in regard to soldier settlement. The unfortunate part of it is that the failures we have

[Mr. G. P. Barnes.]

to admit making of those soldier settlements are having a rather sad effect on the land settlement and migration questions as a whole. It has been pointed out that with all our facilities available for these men, and seeing that they were largely Queenslanders—men used to our conditions—if they could not make a success of our land settlement schemes, what likelihood is there of success from those coming across the water without that experience and facility at their disposal? This question takes a lot of answering. When the Empire Parliamentary Delegation was here, no doubt you, Mr. Speaker, heard some reference made to that topic—that it was difficult to imagine that people sent out from the old country without any experience of Australian conditions, and without anything like the assistance made available to our soldiers, would succeed where the returned soldiers failed so lamentably in their various efforts in land settlement under our returned soldiers scheme.

I remember, and no doubt other hon. members in this House will remember that, when this question was originally before this Chamber, many of us pointed the finger of danger to the districts to which these soldiers were being directed. I know of nothing more calamitous with respect to a man who is proposing to settle on the land than to put him in a district and on soil which will not return him reasonable emoluments for the effort expended. I am making that statement with some experience of the matter. I remember also pointing to the districts round about Bowen, in which the hon. member for Bowen should be particularly interested. I am still convinced that, had the returned men been directed into that area, the latitude and climatic conditions would have assisted them materially in supplying fruit at times when the markets are bare. That would have given these men a start, and made them so successful that they would have little or no desire to turn back.

Most of these men have been put into fruitgrowing occupations, and we must admit that, had we so directed their efforts as to cause them to produce fruit at a time when the markets wanted it, when the markets were bare of fruit which could compete with them, we should have given these men a very excellent start. That is the position in the electorate represented by the hon. member for Bowen. There, by reason of its latitudinal situation, it is possible to grow fruit when the market is bare of competing fruits, and the grower can secure prices for such fruit which are really extraordinary. Without wishing to weary the House, let me give an example in connection with the growing of tomatoes. As the hon. member for Bowen knows, those growing tomatoes during the last season in his electorate secured up to 20s. for a case containing 28 lb. of tomatoes. The same thing applies with almost equal force to the growing of pineapples, with which Beerburum was closely associated. Had those men been put into districts where they could produce fruits at a time when the market was bare, instead of placing them in areas where they could only add to the existing glut, it is only common-sense reasoning that we certainly should not have to pass the measure which is now before the House. All that is past and gone, but, unfortunately, it seems to be necessary that we should direct some attention to those instances in order to protect

ourselves against creating a similar bad experience in times to come.

Then it seems to me that the Government made a very fatal blunder in bunching together a lot of men who had just returned from an ordeal such as the war. Had these men been interspersed with farmers who had made a success of farming in the past, they might have had a different tale to tell to-day. Instead, they were bunched together with no leavening of experienced farmers, and were left to work out their own salvation. No doubt they had been in the habit over the other side of congregating together and comparing and exaggerating their grievances, and the danger was that they might become so wrapped up in their grievances as to forget their farms. I have always contended that the best policy to pursue, not only with regard to soldiers, but with regard to land settlement generally, which may deal with men from other parts of the world, is to intersperse amongst the rank and file experienced farmers who have already made a profitable venture of farming. That deprives those people of the opportunity to complain, and causes them to see by the example of the other fellow that it is possible to make a success of it. That man sees that his neighbour is doing so, and he endeavours to do likewise.

At one time there were approximately 200 settlers on the Beerburum settlement. Those 200 men, unnerved by the war, many with no experience on the land, in the habit of meeting together and airing their complaints—in fact, having in some instances instilled into their minds that it is the right thing to complain—as soon as they met with any difficulty, met together, discussed, and, no doubt, exaggerated that difficulty. Assuming that they had been interspersed with men who had already made a success of farming, can it not be seen that we would have been rid of this great problem with which we are contending to-day? Personally I think this is a matter which has been most unfortunately conceived, in that the energies of these men have been directed along the wrong channel. I know Mr. Rose personally. He was one of the first men I ever saw in Queensland when I came here with the object of fruitgrowing, and I saw what a profitable business he was making of fruitgrowing. What induced him to direct the attention of the Land Settlement Committee towards Beerburum and other similar localities, as I understand he did, I cannot conceive.

Any man with a limited knowledge of fruitgrowing, such as possibly I possess, must see immediately that it is impossible to grow pineapples profitably in that area. It is a calamity, and the only way to overcome it when Queensland is tottering under a very severe debt, the full effect of which is not yet felt, is to establish confidence in the minds of the people so that they can face the sad and serious losses and tackle the matter in a businesslike way, and I do contend that the Secretary for Public Lands is not doing it. I do not suggest that it is his fault, but I do argue that, as a responsible Minister, he should so arrange matters that this question is tackled in a comprehensive manner, and so that we shall not need to revert to this problem.

I am firmly of the opinion that this proposal is only a palliative. It may last for years, but it is not going to be a cure. It

will leave the soldier settlers with land that is over-capitalised, with a burden on their shoulders, and still attempting to produce something which the land was never meant to produce in a manner to provide a living for those men. We want to know the truth, and we want to ascertain the actual position, and deal with the whole matter and not introduce a palliative which is going to put a plaster on a sore that is going to break out again in the not distant future. The only way to establish confidence in Queensland—if we do not do it, no one else will—is by facing the position manfully, and, as members of the Opposition have rightly pointed out, it is not only a question of the determination of the values of land and of writing off interest. You have to study the human element involved. You have to convert the disgruntled men from their present frame of mind into an outlook of enthusiasm and hope for the future; and you are not going to do that by the methods that we have persistently adopted here for some years past. I do not want to prolong the discussion unnecessarily; but it is a matter that calls for comment from every man who has the welfare of these men at heart, and who wants to get at the root of this trouble.

I again repeat that it is most unfortunate that in the closing hours of the session, when we have no opportunity of fully debating it, we should have a most important measure of this nature brought before us. We are of opinion that an interchange of views would not do any harm, but incalculable good. I hope the Minister is going to achieve that which he anticipates, but personally I have very grave doubts indeed, because I know of nothing more calamitous than to expect a man to live peacefully and satisfactorily on land which at no time is ever likely to return him sufficient to keep a wife and family.

Mr. KING (*Logan*): The question of soldier settlement is not a question that applies to Queensland only. It is Australian-wide, and I suppose it is a question that is agitating the minds of those in control in every British Dominion.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It affects every country which took part in the war.

Mr. KING: There is no doubt about that, and under the circumstances I, like the hon. member for Oxley, regret that a matter of such importance should be brought forward at the tail-end of the session: and not only brought on at the tail-end of the session, but rushed on to such an extent that members of the Opposition have not had the opportunity of giving the matter that earnest consideration which the subject deserves. Everybody must admit that the question of soldier settlement is a very burning question indeed. It requires a tremendous amount of study and consideration as to the best means of solving the problems with which we are faced in this connection. We have this Bill thrown at us at the tail-end of the session, and we are expected to discuss it in an intelligent manner before we have even had an opportunity of perusing it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I saw no evidence of a rush this morning.

Mr. KING: We did not know where we stood this morning. We believed that the Bill would not go far enough in the direction we were led to believe it would go, and we

[*Mr. Elphinstone.*

asked that it should be left as open as possible so that we should be able to amend it in Committee to secure the best results in the interest of the soldier settler. If the Minister had given us a little more information at that stage, we might have saved a good deal of time. We know that the soldier settlers require relief, and we have to adopt the best means to give them that relief. It has been said before, and I repeat, that we ought to discuss this matter absolutely apart from the party standpoint, as it is not a question of party politics. Hon. members on this side are desirous—and I think there are hon. members opposite who are just as desirous as we are—of doing the best for the returned soldier and of improving his condition. I think the House is wholeheartedly in favour of trying to do something in that direction. Therefore, we ought to consider this matter apart altogether from party politics in order to obtain the best results. The hon. member for Bowen spoke on this matter.

Mr. COLLINS: I have not spoken in this debate yet.

Mr. KING: The hon. member spoke at the introductory stage. I have a very kindly feeling for the hon. member as a man, although I think he is rather eccentric in his politics. I was rather surprised to hear the hon. member—who, perhaps, has suffered bereavement as much as anyone in the House through the loss of his son—say that he would like to see the word "soldier" eliminated from the scheme altogether.

Mr. COLLINS: Hear, hear!

Mr. KING: I am sorry for that, because I recognise that soldiers are men to whom we must give the very best consideration. It is for their benefit that we are discussing this Bill, and they are worthy of the highest consideration. When we remember what they did for us, we ought to consider what we can do for them.

Mr. COLLINS: Is not the Bill called "The Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Acts Amendment Bill"?

Mr. KING: Yes, and we are dealing with soldiers. I do not want this House or the people of Queensland to forget that we are dealing with soldiers—not with the object of perpetuating the idea of war, but more for the purpose of realising our obligations and responsibilities to these soldiers.

Mr. COLLINS: There are more soldiers in my electorate than in any other electorate in Queensland, and there are no complaints from them at all.

Mr. KING: That may be so. The hon. member, when speaking this morning, seemed to think that certain large land-owners in Queensland should have come forward and placed their lands at the disposal of these returned men. I do not agree with the hon. member in that. This is not the concern of any individual land-owner in Queensland. It is the concern of the people of Queensland, and, as Parliament is representative of the people of Queensland, it is the concern of Parliament. I do not think it is right to cast aspersions on men who own large areas of land because they did not give the land necessary for this purpose. In dealing with discharged soldiers we are dealing with a class of men who perhaps have become different to the ordinary

members of the community. They were taken from their civil avocations in the community and sent away to a different life altogether. We might say that some of them lived for four or five years in hell, and subject to every inducement to change their characters and dispositions. Can we expect these men—who are not the men in character and disposition who went away—to go back to their ordinary civil avocations without any trouble?

Mr. BULCOCK: Does not that prove the difficulty of the Government's problem?

Mr. KING: I know it does. It is a very difficult problem indeed to deal with, as I have already said, and we as an Opposition are sincerely desirous of assisting the Government to deal with it. We are dealing with men who have changed in character and disposition to a large extent by being taken away from peaceful civil life and thrown into the turmoil of the worst war that has ever been known.

Mr. COLLINS: The men who went to the South African war gave no trouble at all.

Mr. KING: I do not think anybody would compare the South African war with the horrors of the European war. Taking all things into consideration, it is a very difficult thing indeed to settle these men again in civil life.

Mr. F. A. COOPER: There was a great disparity in the gratuities.

Mr. KING: I do not think any differentiation was made so far as gratuity was concerned. I understand they all got a gratuity according to their length of service. We have to settle these men to the best advantage, and the trouble appears to me to be to a very large extent that they have been settled on inferior land. Therefore, the necessity arises for us to pass legislation which will relieve them of their liabilities to a large extent. In my electorate I have the Mount Gravatt soldier settlement, where the settlers carry on the business of poultry-raising. I cannot help saying that the selection of the Mount Gravatt site was ill-advised and misconceived, because, if ever there was a failure of a soldier settlement, it is to be found in that place.

Mr. BULCOCK: Some of the settlers have succeeded.

Mr. KING: Very few; and every credit is due to those few. A small portion of the settlement may be suitable for this particular purpose, but the greater part is not.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: How do you explain the fact that some have failed on exactly the same quality of land on which others have succeeded?

Mr. KING: That is where I differ from the hon. gentleman. The land is not of the same quality. There you have a tract of land with a very small area which you can call good. The rest is barren ridges with no land or very little land suitable for cultivation, and no water supply. I have been told by poultry experts and by men who have tried to make a living there that the essentials for a poultry settlement of this description are sufficient land to enable one to grow a little bit of green feed, and a water supply.

Mr. BULCOCK: All those favourable conditions obtain at Enoggera, but there is no greater ratio of success at Enoggera than at Mount Gravatt.

Mr. KING: They have been more successful at Enoggera than at Mount Gravatt. There are very few of the original settlers remaining at Mount Gravatt, and they have not been outstanding successes. They have striven and struggled from hand to mouth to make a living. They have put every penny they had into the business, including their gratuity money, and many have lost, and they have had to go; and one of the worst features of the business is that some of the men who have had to abandon their holdings have been threatened with action for their rent and some of them have been sued. It is to be deplored that, when a man has to leave his holding—and a man will not leave his place if he can make a living—and when he is down and out, he should be threatened with a writ. It has been my privilege to be of some little assistance professionally to some of these men.

[7.30 p.m.]

The Bill proposes to validate certain advances already made, and the Government propose to wipe out a certain amount due as interest, but to extend differential treatment in this respect. In some cases the interest is wiped off up to 1st January, 1925, in other cases up to 1st January, 1926, and in other cases up to 1st January, 1928. I believe that there should be no differentiation at all.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Is there no differentiation between grazing, dairying, and fruitgrowing propositions?

Mr. KING: I do not think that matters. They are all working under disabilities. Most of them have failed, and that is why they ask for relief. If any settlers are entitled to relief on the score of the barrenness or unsuitability of the ground upon which they were dumped, then the settlers at Mount Gravatt are entitled to be forgiven their interest to 1st January, 1928, instead of to 1st January, 1926. That is a fault that I find with the Bill. The Government are making a big song about wiping off these arrears of interest; but they thought nothing of wiping off £800,000 in connection with State enterprises. According to the Auditor-General's report, a sum of £250,000 has been written off as the result of abandonment of properties by soldier settlers. If the Government can wipe off £800,000 in connection with State enterprises, then surely they can make some concession to soldier settlers!

Many reasons have been advanced as to why these settlements have not been a success. Provision is made in the Bill for increasing the areas, and that might assist in some cases. I certainly think the Bill is one that does not go nearly far enough, and deals with a question that is too big to be dealt with in the last days of the session. We should appoint representatives from both sides of the Chamber to go into the question. Let us get down to bedrock and deal with the matter in the best possible way.

It has been stated that it will be necessary for the settlers in the future to seek further relief. Let us deal with this matter once and for all on a satisfactory basis in order that we may do the very best we can for these men. Some seem to think that, if they cannot make a success on these extended terms, they need only struggle along for a further period, when they can seek further concessions. That is not a way in which to build up the manhood of this class of settler.

Mr. King.]

We want to give all the relief that is possible in order to place them on a fair and square footing, and then let them battle for themselves.

There are certain matters in the Bill which require a close investigation, and I hope that, when the Bill reaches the Committee stage, the Minister will be reasonable and accept amendments. I am afraid, however, that our opportunities in that respect will be limited.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The Minister will be reasonable.

Mr. KING: I believe that the Minister is desirous that the measure shall be a real and not an imaginary relief to the soldier settlers; and we can only attain that end by the Minister being reasonable and accepting amendments.

Mr. CLAYTON (*Wide Bay*): I did not speak on the introductory stage of this Bill because I believed I could do so in a more intelligent way when the Bill was circulated.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: That is a castigation of members of your party who spoke this morning.

Mr. CLAYTON: The Bill was not circulated until after the Minister began to make his second reading speech. It is absolutely wrong that the business of the House should be conducted in that way when an important measure of this sort is brought down.

For years and years we have been discussing the question of affording relief to soldier settlers, but it is questionable whether this Bill will afford the relief that is necessary to ensure the success of our soldier settlement scheme. It would be a move in the right direction to appoint a commission from both sides of the House to go into and discuss this problem. It is a very serious problem for Queensland, and the returned soldier settlers are suffering at the present time.

It has been said that the soldier has not made a success of the land settlement scheme through inexperience. I can disprove that assertion by showing that where returned men have been settled on good land they have made good.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CLAYTON: It is the land that has been at fault, and nothing else has contributed to the failure of the soldiers to make good. The hon. member for Bowen stated that he has a successful soldier settlement in his electorate.

Mr. COLLINS: I never said anything of the sort. I said I had settlements of soldiers in my district—not returned soldier settlements.

Mr. CLAYTON: That is because the land in the Bowen district is suitable for settlement purposes. I do not know of any worse land that could have been selected in South Queensland for soldier settlement than that which was selected.

The failure of Beerburrum was due to the land being generally unsuitable for agriculture or fruitgrowing. That land would have been taken up years and years ago if it had been suitable for those purposes. The men who were responsible for the settlement of soldiers at Beerburrum should not be allowed

[*Mr. King.*

to negotiate with regard to any further land settlement in the future. A great many holdings at Beerburrum have been deserted. Some of the men at Beerburrum have been successfully settled at Mary's Creek, in the Gympie district. I have been informed that, when the late Mr. Coyne was Secretary for Public Lands, he had a consultation with the hon. member for Cooroora with regard to the scrub lands in the Gympie district. As a result of those negotiations returned soldiers took up land at Mary's Creek, where they have proved successful settlers. That is an instance proving that the land was to blame for their previous failure and not the men.

The Bill is also intended to afford relief by writing off outstanding interest payments. I do not know that the writing off of interest is going to settle the question of soldier settlements. We should go seriously and thoroughly into the question—more so than is going to be done by the introduction of this Bill. I know that previously interest has been wiped off, and that many men who have had their interest wiped off have not been conscientious with regard to meeting their indebtedness to the State. I shall quote an unfortunate experience that occurred in my district. A man had a cane property in the Bauple area, and borrowed the money from the mill to meet his indebtedness to the State. He met his interest three days before the date of the concession, and he had to continue in debt through the following off season because he had met his indebtedness in an honourable manner, whereas those who had failed to meet their indebtedness were afforded relief. I put the matter before the then Secretary for Public Lands, the present Premier, but he failed to afford any relief to that man. It is regrettable that such cases cannot receive more favourable consideration for such men are genuine settlers.

The Elambah settlement, in my electorate, which is near Cinnabar, has proved a failure, and the reason for that is that the land is not suitable for cultivation and the areas are far too small. Fancy those soldier settlers having to go on land where the rainfall is inadequate and where the areas are from only 98 to 110 acres! I brought the matter under the notice of the then Secretary for Public Lands, the late Mr. Coyne, and asked that these men should be permitted to take additional lands which had been thrown open in the district. The reply was that they had a living area and were not eligible to take up additional land. The result is that some of those holdings are now deserted. As the men deserted the holdings I again brought the matter before the Minister to see whether two of the areas could not be thrown into one, so enabling the remaining settlers to continue.

The SPEAKER: Order! I would point out that the hon. member cannot discuss the whole ambit of soldier settlement on this Bill. The Bill is to amend the Act "in certain particulars."

Mr. CLAYTON: Clause 10 states that under this Bill the Government are moving to increase areas that have been selected, and I am trying to prove the necessity for increasing these areas. It is essential that the areas in the Elambah settlement should be enlarged. I have a letter from this

settlement, written by a representative of the settlers there, and with your permission, Mr. Speaker, I will read it to the House—

“Cinnabar,
“20th September, 1926.

“Mr. Clayton, M.L.A.,
“Parliament House,
“Brisbane.

“Dear Sir,—Just a line notifying you that we were successful in our application for Government rations through your prompt action in interviewing the Home Secretary on our behalf, and we all thank you for your kindness. Things are getting shocking round here; cattle are dying, and the rain is as far off as ever. I can see us losing every hoof if we don't get rain shortly; no grass to be seen anywhere, and the water is giving out. I would like you now, on our behalf, to either interview the manager of the Agricultural Bank or bring the question up in the House to see if it is at all possible to get the bank to give us concessions whereby we shall not be called upon to pay any interest on moneys loaned until such times as the seasons change, so as to give us a chance of getting on our feet again. Every one of us has got into debt, and are destitute through not earning sufficient to meet our monthly ‘tucker’ bills, caused through the adverse seasons, and the small areas allotted to us, they being insufficient to carry more milkers whereby we could earn more in the full milking (such as it is) to tide us over the months in which we are unable to milk at all.

“Trusting you will take whatever action you think most effective; also hoping we are not encroaching too much on your valuable time,

“I am,
“Yours faithfully,
“Ralph Kershaw.”

That is the position of a soldier settlement in my electorate at the present time, and we should do everything we possibly can to afford relief to those settlers. I would suggest that a representative be sent up to that settlement to go thoroughly into the position and ascertain whether the areas are too small and see if it is not possible to allow these men larger areas than they now have, and thus put them in a position in which they can make a living. Some of these men could be most successfully settled in the Gympie district. We have made the suggestion—I think the Minister is favourable to it—that certain scrub lands in the Gympie district could be utilised for the production of bananas, combined with pine growing. That land could be made available at a very small cost, and I trust that the Minister will give favourable consideration to the proposal. Unfortunately we have not had very much time to go thoroughly into the Bill so as to ascertain what is necessary to improve the conditions of the soldier settlers; but we shall bring forward certain amendments, and, if the Minister is reasonable and can see his way to accept them, they will be in the interests of the returned soldiers.

Mr. H. M. RUSSELL (*Toombul*): I am quite sure that the Minister will be pleased to hear suggestions from this side of the House on this very important matter. Time is not wasted in getting the opinions of members on both sides of the House, as this is a question that is beyond party, and a matter demanding immediate redress. I have no soldier settlements in my electorate, so that any opinion I may express is not biased in any way, nor can I be accused of “talking to the gallery.” We are all of opinion that we owe a duty to these men. While every State in Australia has put through legislation to deal with this question, it must be admitted that a great deal of money has been wasted. We all appreciate the motives behind the measures which were introduced into the various Legislatures of Australia, but we must admit to-day—

Mr. RIORDAN (*Burke*): I rise to a point of order. I would draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to Standing Order 141, which reads—

“Mr. Speaker, or, in a Committee of the Whole House, the Chairman, may call the attention of the House or the Committee, as the case may be, to continued irrelevance or tedious repetition on the part of a member, either of his own arguments or the arguments used by other members, and may after such warning direct the member to discontinue his speech: Provided that the member so directed may require Mr. Speaker or the Chairman, as the case may be, to put the question that he be further heard, and such question, if so required to be put, shall be put without debate.”

The SPEAKER: The hon. member for Toombul, having just risen, has not yet been guilty of tedious repetition.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. H. M. RUSSELL: I know quite well that I am in your hands, Mr. Speaker, and that I shall get a fair deal from you. I think the hon. member's intervention was rather out of place, inasmuch as I had only just started.

Mr. BULCOCK: What you said has been repeated fifty times.

Mr. H. M. RUSSELL: So far I have not said anything that has been said before. (Government laughter.) I was leading up to the point that this is one of the greatest financial tragedies in the history of the State, and the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth Government are very much involved. It is not really within our province at this juncture to castigate the Government for any of the blunders they have committed. What they did was, I concede, done in good faith, and in common with the legislation passed in other States we endeavoured to settle this problem in our own way; but, after reading the Auditor-General's report, we must admit that there has been a complete record of disaster ever since the inception of this legislation. The Government are to be commended in that they are endeavouring to give some redress to the soldier settlers. While the proposals are in the right direction, I hope to show that they do not go far enough inasmuch as they do not strike at the root of the matter, and it

Mr. H. M. Russell.]

is simply staving off the question for another year or two. While we are dealing with the matter, we should endeavour to effect a radical cure of the whole trouble, but I do not think this Bill will have that result. If the Minister had given us earlier notice of this Bill, we might have been able to save a good deal of time to-day.

Mr. BULCOCK: What about tedious repetition now?

Mr. H. M. RUSSELL: You are not the Speaker, anyhow. I am prepared to accept the Speaker's ruling, and not yours.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must address the Chair.

Mr. H. M. RUSSELL: We certainly adopted wrong methods at the beginning. We all considered that, when these men came back from the war, they should settle on the land, inasmuch as they would otherwise disturb the industrial conditions of the country; but failures have resulted. A lot of the trouble would have been obviated if at the outset the various Governments had appointed responsible men to give proper advice to the settlers.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They did appoint responsible men.

Mr. H. M. RUSSELL: I think the most notable instance of failure is Beerburum. Anyone who knows anything about the North Coast country knows that the Beerburum area consists of poor sandy soil. There was a big stretch of unoccupied country there, and, had the land been any good, there is no doubt that the district would have been closely settled twenty years ago. I cannot understand for one moment how Beerburum came to be selected. If the Government were advised by responsible or experienced men, I am sorry to say they were wrongly advised, because to-day it is the outstanding failure of all the settlements. I really think that the wisest thing to do at Beerburum would be to "throw in the towel" and put the men elsewhere. I do not think that the method proposed in the Bill of forgiving the interest till the end of 1927 is going to have any effect whatever. It is a temporary palliative, and does not strike at the root of the trouble. The land at Beerburum is costly to work and to maintain, and I think it would be far better if the settlement were abandoned altogether. It is beyond my comprehension, why when legislation was first introduced, the Government did not endeavour to settle men on some of the rich scrub lands in their possession. It was only the other day that a large quantity of pine timber was sold in the Maryborough district. Wherever pine grows we have very fine soil, and in 1917, when the first Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Act was passed, the Government were in possession of large tracts of scrub country at Yarraman and in other districts, and, if a few acres of decent country had been given to these men, I venture to say that the majority of them would now be making a decent living. On land like that at Beerburum that is impossible. I have always said that it is hungry miserable country hardly suitable even for pasturage. In order to help these men the Government of the day decided to establish a pineapple cannery, the idea being to encourage them to go in for the culture of pine-

apples on a large scale. This very fine expensive cannery, with an up-to-date plant, has not been a success because it has been found impossible to pack the Queensland pineapple and export it at a profit because the markets of the world are supplied with cheaper pineapples from the Sandwich Islands and other places. So the idea behind the cannery has fallen to the ground, and the men at Beerburum have to rely on the local market, which is so small that it does not take very long to overtake the consumption of this commodity. Therefore, I say that the proposal to forgive the interest at Beerburum will not have the effect which the Government wish. It is an experiment, and we all hope it is going to be a success, because our sympathy goes out to the men who have had such a hard struggle there.

What I have said in regard to Beerburum applies to other districts, but Stanthorpe offers another case of failure where men with no knowledge of fruitgrowing have been put on the land. Stanthorpe is in a very dry area and, what is worse, the settlers have had to fight the fruit-fly pest. The proposal in the Bill is to write off the interest until five years after the planting of the first fruit trees on each holding, the intention being to give each man five years' clear run without the payment of interest. I do not think that at the end of five years they will be able to pay interest, and I am perfectly sure that they will find it very difficult to pay back any capital.

[3 p.m.]

The settlers at Stanthorpe were encouraged to produce fruit and vegetables, and in order to assist them a pulping factory was established, but unfortunately that has proved a failure and has been closed. When it was anticipated that a large tonnage of tomatoes would be treated, forward contracts for tomato pulp were made in the South, but it was eventually found that the dry weather had reduced the output by from 75 per cent. to 80 per cent. No doubt a number of the men in the Stanthorpe district have been very disheartened, and most of them have left the job practically broken-hearted.

It was pointed out by one hon. member that the soldier settlers had made a success in the Gympie district, but that was because they were settled in decent country. The hon. member for Cooroora knows that there is decent scrub land around Gympie upon which settlers have been able to make a decent living in growing bananas and other things. Rather than encourage the settlers by promises to continue with what seems to be a hopeless task, it would be far better, even now, if they were shifted to better country where they would have a better chance of making a decent living.

The Bill provides for differential treatment in the matter of writing off interest. No doubt the Minister will explain the reason for that when we are in Committee. It is to be hoped that it will give the settlers the necessary relief.

To my mind the most important matter dealt with in the Bill is the writing-down of capital. The Bill provides—

"In any case where any officer or officers deputed in that behalf by the Minister to make inquiry has or have, after such inquiry, recommended to the

[*Mr. H. M. Russell.*]

Minister that relief should be extended to a discharged soldier who has obtained an advance by reducing the capital sum of such advance, the Minister may afford the relief so recommended. . . ."

To me that is the most notable feature of the Bill. I believe that it will be necessary in a great many instances to write down the capital cost to these soldier settlers to encourage them to remain on their blocks. I know it is a difficult matter for men to leave their habitation and seek pastures new; but, if it is at all possible to keep them there, we should write down the capital cost and place them in a better financial position to meet their obligations. This is the main feature of the Bill, and I hope the settlers will receive at the hands of the Minister the most favourable consideration. It is not too late for the Government to overhaul the whole question of soldier settlements. A number of these men are very restive, and no doubt have a number of grievances, and it should be our object to try to make them contented.

The Government might well go to the expense of appointing one or two experts in agriculture, fruitgrowing, and kindred subjects to go round the various soldier settlements and advise these men, a great number of whom are unacquainted with agriculture and its kindred subjects, and it must mean years of labour to them before they become acclimatised. I hope the Government will give this suggestion serious consideration.

It is to be hoped that the effect of the passing of this measure with amendments will be that some of the grievances which are at present pressing very heavily on the soldier settlers will be redressed. It should be our main object to make the lot of our rural population as comfortable and contented as possible in order to encourage them to remain on the land and produce commodities required by the community.

Mr. WALKER (*Cooorora*): I did not take part in this debate on the introduction of the Bill because I did not believe the time was opportune, as I desired to see the Bill to ascertain what proposals the Government really intended to bring down.

I regret very much that the second reading of such an important Bill should take place so hurriedly. Every session since the war took place we have had discussions in this Chamber on soldier settlement. There seems to be no finality to the subject, and I am afraid that, if this Bill is hurried through in the manner in which it is probably going to be, we shall continue this debate not only next session, but also in the following session.

The question of soldier settlement is a big one. There is a certain amount of sense in the concessions contained in the Bill—that is, from what we can gather by casually hurrying through it—but there is a great deal more to be done than merely passing this Bill.

In the first place, we must recognise that soldier settlement is a very big question indeed. The amount of land which we have in Queensland suitable for closer settlement work has been so much exaggerated as to create false ideas in the minds of many people. We have very little land for production with a good rainfall. While the

men were returning from the war we heard vague rumours about settling 1,000,000 men on 1,000,000 farms. That idea originated away from Australia. Probably that impression was created by our boasting about our own country. The result was that we rushed the returned men on their return on to land which was quite unsuitable for settlement purposes. I recognise that the Government acted very honourably in asking that a member of the Opposition should be appointed to the Commonwealth Returned Soldiers' Land Settlement Committee to advise in regard to the formation of these settlements. It is only fair, therefore, that the Opposition should take a certain amount of responsibility in regard to any mistakes that may have occurred. Then we must go a little farther and remember that all over the world wherever they have had soldier settlement schemes they have proved a downright failure. They have proved a failure in Queensland, New South Wales, and Western Australia. The greatest failure took place in Canada last year. The experiences of that country prove that it is a difficult matter to settle men on the land—not because they are soldiers, but because—and this is the main reason—they have been away from ordinary methods of livelihood and a certain amount of relaxation has taken place, and discipline has been thrown on one side. Besides, both State and Federal Governments were particularly liberal during this war in the matter of advances to soldiers, and we gave big gratuities. Everything looked particularly green. Unfortunately, that money was not spent as wisely as it might have been. While the settlement in Canada proved to be a failure, the land given to those soldiers and upon which they failed has since been given to English selectors, who have proved a success. I recognise that we have still to surmount the difficulty. I also recognise that, while soldier settlement on the group system has been a failure, the opposite has occurred with regard to individual settlers. In the Gympie district hundreds of returned soldiers have proved themselves individually as successful as any other farmers, even under drought conditions. I hope we shall have no more group settlements.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Even some of the ordinary group settlements have proved failures.

Mr. WALKER: Most of our group settlements have proved failures, although I know of a number established in the time of the late Hon. J. T. Bell that proved otherwise. There is something missing—something which takes away incentive and prevents a man from doing his best. At the same time, I consider the Premier was wrong the other night in saying that these men were not suitable for land settlement. One has only to come in contact with individual settlers to realise that that is not so. Take the Gympie area, where a large tract of country has been cut up into 40 and 80-acre blocks and selected by miners under the old agricultural homestead conditions. Those men have done exceptionally well. The main fault with regard to group settlement was the mistakes made by the adviser. The man who advised the Government to take up such country as Beerburum and Coominya for soldier settlements should be ashamed of himself if he classes himself as a practical

Mr. Walker.]

man. There is no excuse for him. When the Beerburum settlement proved to be so disastrous, the Minister, the late Mr. H. Coyne, got in touch with me regarding the Calico Creek district, and ten or twelve men were transferred to that district from Beerburum. To-day those men, as the Minister knows, are absolutely successful.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Some were also transferred from the Highlands settlement.

Mr. WALKER: That is so, on account of the frosts. The Highlands settlement was another mistake. Those experiences prove that these men can be successfully settled.

I have some good suggestions to make, and I would like them to be taken into consideration. I would like to see a committee formed consisting of a couple of practical farmers from each side of this House. Those men could assist the Minister in his endeavours to right the situation. I realise that the Minister has been backed up with very good assistance in the past, and the present Premier also received excellent assistance while he was Secretary for Public Lands.

They want outside help, and I venture to say that, if they get that, they will settle many of these discontented men to-day. Put them up in the Mary Valley. The Government could settle hundreds of returned men there to-morrow, if they only threw open the land. It is good land. I am prepared to take any man over that land and show him land that can be put into work to-morrow. If the Minister cannot alienate that land, allow them to have it under the system of reforestation which has been initiated by the department this year, and let them grow bananas and pine trees. That will get over the difficulty. Bananas to-day, according to the "Courier," are worth 25s. per case. That is a good price. But we do not want to put all our energies into the growing of fruit. That was one of the mistakes at Beerburum. Had we been able to export our bananas to countries where there is an unlimited demand, I have no hesitation in saying that we could put all our land under bananas to-morrow and successfully settle Beerburum. I would like the Minister to do as I suggest and make a name for himself. If he does that, he will surmount the greatest difficulty he has had to contend with since he has been in the House; and he could settle numbers of soldiers inside twelve months if he could get surveyors to work or would accept a feature survey.

It is proposed under this Bill to enlarge the areas. That has been the cause of a lot of complaint. Take the Atherton Tableland, where they have beautiful land. Nobody can dispute the quality of that land for maizegrowing, but, if any common-sense farmer took the trouble to work out the return per acre from maize and multiplied it by the maximum area given by the Crown, he would see instantly that the soldier settlers at Atherton could not make the basic wage on the area given to them. Now it is proposed to enlarge those areas; but how are they going to give a settler more land when someone has taken up the adjacent block? There is only one course open, and that is to throw open any land available

[Mr. Walker.

on the Atherton Tableland. I do not know whether any is available there, but, generally speaking, there is no land down here available for settlement where a man could make a living, except in the Mary Valley, that is suitable for good, closer settlement. Is it worth while entering into experiments of this description? We have had too much advice up to the present time, and have had to wipe off £320,000. It has cost a couple of million pounds already, and why run any more risk of wasting money on some hasty scheme? We should consider the question more seriously, and give more time to it than is being done at present. We know perfectly well that these soldiers did excellent work in fighting for us. We do not want to harp on that too much, but we give them all credit for it. They have been generously treated all along, but it is a fair thing to see that they get an opportunity of earning a decent livelihood. I know any number of returned men who have never had an opportunity of taking up land. Men on this side of the Chamber have sons who have never had an opportunity of taking up land, as no land has been thrown open in their districts since the war.

They may have had to go away up North, or as far as the settlement in the Stanthorpe district away from the places they know. We say we ought to be fair and meet the needs of the returned soldier. If he desires it, let us give him an opportunity of taking up work under the conditions which prevail to-day, and we shall then be doing a fair thing; but we want to follow that up with good practical advice. We can get the advice of a committee composed of members of this House, and it will not incur any expense at all to get that advice. A committee of five members of the House, for instance, could advise the Minister in regard to dairying, banana, or pine-growing land, or in regard to anything else which is produced in Queensland. The committee could meet every six months, or we could have a committee of inspection, as the case might be. There is nothing to stop us from getting at the root of the trouble and providing for men who are looking for land to-day.

We have a monument in Beerburum, which is a disgrace to Queensland. There are large areas of sandy country with really no good soil, and the land is of a poor character. The clearing of the land cost as much as £40 an acre. The land was over-capitalised at the start. The soldier lost his money and got into debt, and the worst of it is that he has given four or five years of his life to no purpose, and that time cannot be recalled. Let us see if we cannot meet these men and help them to overcome the difficulty even by slowing down the passage of the Bill. Do not let us hurry the Bill through, but adjourn it for a week or two, or perhaps till next session. If we appoint a committee to go into the matter, we shall do far more good than by rushing this legislation through in the way in which it is being rushed through at the present time.

The PREMIER (Hon. W. McCormack, Cairns): I beg to move—

"That the question be now put."

which I gave when moving for leave to introduce the Bill. I therefore move—

“That the Bill be now read a second time.”

Mr. MORGAN: You have not told us whom you are going to appoint.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I cannot tell you what I do not know. (Opposition laughter.)

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): The Minister has not told us the reason for this Bill. We have recently heard rumours that the Chief Justice will probably be appointed Lieutenant-Governor of this State, as it is the desire of Labour members that he should be the representative of the King in Queensland. Is that the reason for the proposed power to appoint a senior puisne judge? The hon. gentleman has not stated what are the intentions of the Government in the matter, and I am seeking for the reason. Generally when the Government introduce a Bill there is some reason behind it.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: There is always a sound reason for everything we do. (Laughter.)

Question put and passed.

COMMITTEE.

(*Mr. Pollock, Gregory, in the chair.*)

Clause 1—“Amendment of section 2—Appointment of senior puisne judge”—agreed to.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported the Bill without amendment.

THIRD READING.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. J. Mullan, *Flinders*): I beg to move—

“That the Bill be now read a third time.”

Question put and passed.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. Stopford, *Mount Morgan*): I beg to move—

“That the Bill be now read a second time.”

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): Is the Minister not going to give us any information as to this Bill?

The HOME SECRETARY: I will give it to you later.

Mr. MOORE: This Bill is not as clear as we would like it to be. This Bill has only one principle in it; but it contains a provision for the making of a special rate to cover a whole area. That is already in the principal Act, and I do not know why it is included here.

The HOME SECRETARY: That applies only if the place is partly sewered.

Mr. MOORE: There is nothing here to make that clear.

[*Hon. J. Mullan.*]

The HOME SECRETARY: This applies specifically to Toowoomba, but I do not want to cut out Townsville, Rockhampton, and other centres.

Mr. MOORE: It is not merely for the Toowoomba Town Council. Subclauses (a) and (b) of clause 2 read—

“(a) Make and levy a special rate, to be called ‘a special sewerage and cleansing rate,’ upon lands within its area, whether occupied or not; or

“(b) Make and levy a special rate, to be called ‘a special sewerage rate,’ upon the lands, whether occupied or not, in the locality defined as aforesaid . . .”

Later the clause says—

“All moneys raised by the local authority in the exercise of its powers under paragraph (a) or paragraph (b) of this section shall be paid into a Special Fund of the local authority, and out of such Fund shall be defrayed the costs and expenses of operating and maintaining the sewerage and drainage works aforesaid.”

I want to know what the words “operating and maintaining” mean. At the present time Toowoomba is suffering from a shortage of water, and this provision means that, when there is a shortage of water as at present, the people in the outside districts may have to meet the cost of providing further water supplies for operating and maintaining sewerage works, which have been provided.

The HOME SECRETARY: It will not affect the outside area.

Mr. MOORE: I am very doubtful about that. I can quite understand the town clerk of Toowoomba making certain statements, but I am going on the position as it is to-day, when there is a serious shortage of water at Toowoomba. This is a definite Bill for a specific purpose. It enables a double rate to be made in one area, so far as I can see—a cleansing rate and a special sewerage rate. I am not concerned about that, because the people in the benefited area will have to pay it. What I want to know is whether the people in the outside area are to be affected detrimentally when there is a shortage of water. If more water is required, I want to see that it will be provided for the sewerage system without any tax on the rest of the area, and that it be a charge on the “operating and maintaining” of the system.

Mr. ROBERTS (*East Toowoomba*): There is a good deal in the contention of the Leader of the Opposition. I recognise that the Bill has been brought in to give some privilege to the City Council of Toowoomba. The sanitary system there has been somewhat altered by a part of the city being sewered and the other part continuing the pan service system; but there is an opinion amongst the people outside the sewered area that there is a possibility that they will have an additional cost placed on them, and they have asked that some protection be afforded to them. In my opinion that protection will not be brought about by the Bill.

The HOME SECRETARY: They are quite satisfied.

Mr. ROBERTS: I know they are quite satisfied, but it is a question for the council

for the time being as to what rate they shall strike. As far as the sewer is concerned, there is a good deal in what was said by the Leader of the Opposition. I fully recognise that there will have to be a supplementary water supply for that city, and, if it can be shown that the additional water is made necessary by the requirements of the sewerage area, then it should be a charge against the benefited area and not against the ratepayers outside that area. If the Minister assures us that that is the intention of the Bill and that it will protect the people who have asked him to come to their assistance, I shall be quite satisfied, but, if the people outside the area are to be called upon to pay their quota of the cost in addition to the cost of the sewerage, then it will be a considerable handicap to them. If we cannot get the assurance at this stage, we may be able to get it in Committee.

The HOME SECRETARY: You asked for the assurance and got it at the last stage.

Mr. ROBERTS: I never raised the question of an additional water supply at the last stage. At present I admit that both parties are satisfied.

Mr. KING (*Logan*): Under section 241 of the Local Authorities Act the local authority has power to strike a cleansing rate, and under section 242 the local authority has power to make a cleansing charge. That is distinct from section 241, one being a rate and the other a charge. It is proposed by this Bill to make further provision that a local authority, in addition to making a cleansing rate, can also make a sewerage rate: there being no provision in the Local Authorities Act to enable it to make a sewerage charge at present. The Bill, first of all, makes provision for a sewerage and cleansing rate for the whole area, and, in addition to that, it makes provision for imposing a special charge upon all lands within a certain locality within the area.

Mr. LEWELYN: In the benefited area.

Mr. KING: We might call it a benefited area, but in the ordinary meaning of the term it will not be a benefited area.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Payment for services rendered.

Mr. KING: That is so; but it is not declared a benefited area for the purpose of additional taxation beyond payment for services rendered. In addition to imposing a special sewerage rate upon the particular area which is being benefited, there is also power to make a cleansing rate or charge for the same benefited area. Is it the intention under the Bill to duplicate the charges in respect of that benefited area, because the Bill gives one that impression? It states that—

“The local authority may in its discretion—

* * * * *

Make and levy a special rate, to be called ‘a special sewerage rate,’ upon the lands, whether occupied or not, in the locality defined as aforesaid which is benefited by such sewerage and drainage works, and make and levy a cleansing rate under section two hundred and forty-one of this Act.”

It appears to me that the particular part of the area which is being benefited—that is,

the part within the area which is being seweraged—is not only going to have a special sewerage rate, but also a special cleansing rate as well. I would like the Home Secretary's assurance with regard to that. I would also like to ask why it is necessary to pay the moneys raised by this rate or charge into a special fund. Why does it not go into the ordinary local fund, as the special cleansing rates and charges do? I understand that where there are no services rendered so far as cleansing is concerned in the ordinary way—that is, dealing with the removal of nightsoil—there are still services rendered in connection with the removal of garbage. Do I understand that under the Bill, in addition to the sewerage rate, the cleansing rate will be in respect of garbage only? If that is so, it is all right. Then the question arises whether, instead of these rates going into a special fund, they could not go into the fund provided under the Local Authorities Act.

The HOME SECRETARY: The loan is for the whole of the area.

Mr. KING: Is the whole of the area to bear the cost of this work?

The HOME SECRETARY: Yes.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must deal only with the principles of the Bill.

Mr. LEWELYN (*Toowoomba*): This question has created a good deal of interest in Toowoomba, and it must be recognised that before the sewerage scheme was entered upon by the Toowoomba City Council the ratepayers were consulted as to the wisdom of borrowing the amount necessary from the Government. At that time the whole of the arguments for and against the undertaking were well discussed. We are now paying interest and redemption by way of a rate, and, in order to adjust certain anomalies, it was found necessary to bring in this amending measure. The Toowoomba City Council has discussed the matter at several of its meetings. Many of the progress associations have also discussed it, and after a good deal of consideration they have all amicably agreed that this amendment submitted by the Home Secretary is the one best suited to the circumstances of the case. I quite agree with the Leader of the Opposition that there is cause for anxiety regarding a plentiful supply of water, but I hope that we are not going to have trouble through lack of water. I do not profess to be a hydraulic engineer or an engineer of any kind, but I do say that we have sufficient catchment areas near Toowoomba suitable for the conservation of water, and I believe that the council would be well advised to look ahead with a view to securing a better supply than we have at present. The present supply is certainly precarious, and, should it give out, the result could only be disastrous.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time—put and passed

COMMITTEE.

(*Mr. Pollock, Gregory, in the chair.*)

Clause 1—“Short title and construction”—agreed to.

Clause 2—“Special sewerage and cleansing rates”—

Mr. COLLINS (*Bowen*): I would like to know from the Minister whether, in the

Mr. Collins.]

event of any town or city in North Queensland wanting to put in a scheme similar to that contemplated by the Bill at Toowoomba. The provisions of this measure will apply.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. Stopford, *Mount Morgan*): One part of the Bill is framed specially to meet the requirements of Toowoomba, and was inserted at the request of the Toowoomba City Council; but we recognise that the circumstances of Toowoomba may not exist in other centres, and the second part of the clause has been provided giving to each locality in the State an opportunity to decide which method it will adopt. The system in Toowoomba is the first of its kind in Queensland, although it has been operating successfully in Lismore and other centres in the South. I am assured that the Toowoomba system is ahead of that of Lismore, experience for years past having brought about an improvement on that system. Rockhampton has for some time considered a similar system, under which the city area would come under the sewerage system, and the outlying centres of the district would still carry on under the pan system, using the sewer and the farm attached to it for the disposal of the nightsoil, thus doing away with the necessity for its destruction in other ways. The Toowoomba Council, elected on the ordinary franchise, decided on this scheme of sewerage, and the Bill gives it power to impose a sewerage rate over the benefited area to meet the cost of the expense incurred in carrying out the sewerage of that area. The outside areas

[9 p.m.] will carry on their system, and, probably, the expenses will be less. Rockhampton and other cities of the North may not be disposed to adopt the same method of rating as Toowoomba, and that is the reason for providing the different methods of rating in the Bill.

Mr. ROBERTS (*East Toowoomba*): The system referred to by the Home Secretary has already disappeared and the pans are disposed of at the dump. I would like to pay a compliment to the city engineer who had charge of this work and carried it out with the utmost expedition, and very little interruption on the part of the staff and the men. The work was carried out very effectively in Toowoomba, and, when a Commonwealth Commission visited Toowoomba a few days ago, they were surprised and expressed considerable gratification at the result of the new venture. Toowoomba is unfortunately situated in connection with a water supply; but, if we can overcome that difficulty, the venture will be very successful. According to the Bill, there is to be a new system of rating. Under the present system of rating only those who receive the service are rated, and it appears to me from the Bill that it will be possible to rate all the properties within the area. I can quite imagine some of the people taking exception to that.

The HOME SECRETARY: The same position exists in Brisbane.

Mr. ROBERTS: I know it does. I can assure the Home Secretary that some of the people in Toowoomba and some of the people who are asking for this scheme do not know all about the method of rating. This is the first occasion on which I have seen the Bill, and I can see a new avenue for imposing taxation, though the method of rating will probably lessen the cost to some of the people receiving the benefit.

{*Mr. Collins.*

Mr. LEWELYN: The Mayor of Toowoomba denies that it is a new avenue for imposing taxation.

Mr. ROBERTS: Clause 2 (a) of the Bill is all right, because it is only fair that those within the benefited area should contribute. Clause 2 (b) deals with services rendered, and provides that the local authority may—

“Make and levy a special rate . . . upon the lands, whether occupied or not . . .”

That is the point—“whether occupied or not.” The Toowoomba Council is, therefore, responsible for the Bill. I would not have drawn attention to it, but for the fact that I do not want it to be said in the days to come when this fact is drawn attention to: “What was the member for East Toowoomba doing?”

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): There is one point I desire the Minister to make clear, and that is as to whether those “operating and maintaining” the system will have to supply a sufficient quantity of water for themselves in the event of the water supply of the Toowoomba Council running short. The hon. member for Toowoomba recognises that the council has barely sufficient water for its ordinary supplies, and he has suggested that sufficient foresight should have been shown to supply the city with more water.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. Stopford, *Mount Morgan*): It is not suggested for a moment that, if the water supply in Toowoomba failed, a sewerage system would be required.

Mr. MOORE: I did not say “failed.” I asked if it became short is it to be a charge on the scheme or not?

The HOME SECRETARY: It cannot be a charge on the scheme. This is a community service, and a water supply is a community service. The community are supposed to provide a water supply for themselves from a community loan. The loan is not repaid, and a benefited area is proclaimed. All this Bill provides for is the working of a sewerage scheme in a benefited area. The people of Toowoomba are big enough to make the cost of the sewerage scheme a charge on the whole community. All they ask for now is authority to charge those people who are receiving the benefit of that scheme a special sewerage rate. All the argument of the hon. member for Aubigny should have been used before the sewerage scheme was constructed. The people of Toowoomba have constructed the sewerage scheme out of money which has to be repaid. The outside areas of the city do not participate in the sewerage scheme, and are served by the pan system. The benefits of the sewerage scheme are greater than the benefits from the pan system. The council now want the right to make the people receiving the benefits of that sewerage system, which may be extended to the other area later, pay a special rate to cover the cost of working that sewer. The hon. member could not say then that the same community should inaugurate a fresh water supply on the same rate.

Mr. ROBERTS (*East Toowoomba*): I have had some experience in local authority work, and the first cost to be considered in running a sewerage system is the supply of water. The people in authority will estimate the

quantity of water supplied in the sewered area, and they will be justified in charging that cost against the scheme. It is not part of the original work. The council has apparently met the cost of the original work.

The HOME SECRETARY: The council will strike the rate.

Mr. ROBERTS: That is so, but in doing so they will have to take into consideration the quantity of water supplied. That will go to determine what rate is to be charged in that area. The people using the water under ordinary conditions are paying for it, but, in addition, there is now the water required for the sewerage. The only reason why they have not two supplies is because it would cost a tremendous amount to inaugurate a second supply. Toowoomba wants to know just where it stands in this matter. The City Council will have power under this Act to make a charge in connection with the sewerage.

Mr. LLEWELYN (*Toowoomba*): I understand that under the Local Authorities Act no local authority has power to make a special sewerage rate, and this Bill empowers the Toowoomba City Council to make such a rate. That explanation should be satisfactory to the Leader of the Opposition. The people of Toowoomba and the Toowoomba City Council are satisfied with the Bill, and the hon. member for East Toowoomba should also support it.

Mr. KING (*Logan*): We are not objecting to the Bill at all, but the Home Secretary does not appear quite to grasp the point that has been raised by the Leader of the Opposition. Under existing conditions there is a water supply in Toowoomba which is barely sufficient at the present time. The Toowoomba City Council is now introducing a sewerage system, which will need a good deal more water than at present.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: According to your contention, this should be a Water Supply Bill as well as a Sewerage Bill.

Mr. KING: No. I want to be quite clear about this matter of "operating and maintaining" these works. Is that to be a charge only on the benefited area or will it apply to the whole area?

The HOME SECRETARY: Power is given to make a rate within the benefited area in proportion to the cost of the scheme.

Mr. KING: We merely wish to be clear on the point whether the benefited area will bear the additional cost of the water supply.

Clause 2 agreed to.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported the Bill without amendment.

THIRD READING.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. Stopford, *Mount Morgan*): I beg to move—

"That the Bill be now read a third time."

Question put and passed.

ALLAN AND STARK BURNETT LANE SUBWAY AUTHORISATION BILL.

SECOND READING.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. Stopford, *Mount Morgan*): I do not think any explanation is necessary, as full information was given at a previous stage of the Bill. If hon. members desire further information, I shall be pleased to give it at the Committee stage. I beg to move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

Question put and passed.

COMMITTEE.

(*Mr. Pollock, Gregory, in the chair.*)

Clauses 1 and 2, schedule, and preamble agreed to.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported the Bill without amendment.

THIRD READING.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. Stopford, *Mount Morgan*): I beg to move—

"That the Bill be now read a third time."

Question put and passed.

INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY (Hon. D. A. Gledson, *Ipswich*): I think most of the information that can be given in connection with this Bill was given yesterday afternoon. The Bill provides for an amendment to section 4 of the Industrial Arbitration Act, and, as I said yesterday, it deals with the question of partnerships. If a partnership is entered into with a minor, that minor may be brought under the Industrial Arbitration Act. It is provided in the Bill that he shall not be brought under the Act until an order has been made by the Board of Trade and Arbitration.

It also provides that he shall come under the Apprenticeship Act of 1924. That comprises the whole of the principles contained in the Bill.

The necessity for the amendment has been found by the department when endeavouring to see that arbitration awards and the Apprenticeship Act are carried out in their entirety. The department has found that in some cases an attempt has been made to get out of the provisions of the Industrial Arbitration Act by employing young persons and including them as nominal partners in a firm. In some cases they are given £5 and receive only a 5 per cent. interest in the business, and they are worked outside the hours of the arbitration awards.

Mr. MOORE: Partners cannot work outside the award of the court now.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: The Leader of the Opposition might think so, but they can be worked any hours the employers like. We find that has been giving such employers an unfair advantage over other employers and employees in

Hon. D. A. Gledson.]

the same or adjoining localities. They have been able to do that and we have been unable to enforce the awards. Under an award certain hours are laid down for a business, and employers cannot employ workers outside those hours. There are, however, some industries in which definite hours are not laid down, and the partners in such industries can get outside the provisions of the award. In addition to that, we find that some of the lads who have been taken on under these conditions have not had the benefit of the Apprenticeship Act, because the employers have been able to keep outside the provisions of the Act, by the employees being taken on as partners. They have, therefore, been able to put them to any work at all, so that they have not learned their trade. As a consequence, the department has had to deal with applications to allow these lads to be put on as improvers after reaching the age of twenty-one, and their lives have been ruined through not being taught their trade, and not having had the advantage which other lads have enjoyed. This is a protection to the employer who is endeavouring to carry out the provisions of the law as it applies in Queensland, and who is endeavouring to do his duty to the youths of our State, and to train them in his business so that they will be able to carry it on afterwards. That is the sole object of the Bill. There are only two clauses in it, and I do not think I need take up any further time in dealing with them. I beg to move—

“That the Bill be now read a second time.”

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): I can quite see that pressure has been brought to bear on the Government by an outside organisation, because some young fellows have been able to get a job which they would not otherwise have been able to get. It is all very well for the Minister to talk about partners being able to work outside the hours laid down by the court. The Minister said that in some industries the partners cannot work outside the hours laid down, but that in other industries the hours were not definitely laid down and the partners could evade the provisions of the award. In connection with all the trades which come before the court the hours of work are fixed in the awards. It is only in the case of one-man shops, refreshment shops, or something like that where awards do not fix hours. The point of view I take is that, if we bring the sons of employers under the Apprenticeship Act, we are going to prevent an employer using his son in the way he wishes to do.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: That is utter nonsense.

Mr. MOORE: It is not nonsense. We have to recognise that a man may have two or three sons, and he can only have one apprentice in his business. The Board can state the conditions and rates of pay under which an apprentice may be taken in connection with any industry. A man may have a son who is over the age which has been fixed for apprenticeship and whom he wishes to put into his own business; but he cannot apprentice him, and, if he has two or three sons, he cannot put them into his business until they reach the age of twenty-one years. The time when he wants to put them into his business is when they should be learning the business. Possibly there may be an isolated

case in which the Apprenticeship Act is being evaded by somebody who is using somebody else as a partner. Presumably the partner is an offending party, and when he goes in he knows the position he is to take up. The Minister may have one or two people in his mind's eye, but, when he tightens up the Act in this way, it may prevent three or four sons from joining their father in his business. Because the hon. gentleman can visualise one or two cases, or because he has been told by some organisation that there are one or two cases, he is going to prohibit the sons of a proprietor from going into his business. That is absolutely wrong. A boy in that position does not necessarily require to be an apprentice. He goes into the business, not so much to learn a trade as to learn the whole of the business, not as an employee, but to run the business, and so he needs to know it from beginning to end. His father puts him into the shop, not to learn any particular part of the business but the whole of the business. That is a very laudable practice which we ought to encourage. This Bill will prevent it.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: Nothing of the sort.

Mr. MOORE: I am quite prepared to believe that it is not in the mind of the Minister to do that, but, when he brings in a tightening-up clause to prevent what he considers to be abuses, we all know that he is going to prevent other things which are not abuses. It is almost impossible to tighten up an Act such as this without making it difficult or impossible to do what I say.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: It can only be brought in on an order of the Board of Trade and Arbitration.

Mr. MOORE: It will be brought in on the order of the Board. The Bill is not introduced for fun. When application is made for an order of the Board, it will be brought in.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: It will not be brought in unless it is just.

Mr. MOORE: To carry out the policy of the Government, we have seen plenty of orders brought in that are not just. The policy of an organisation may be to prevent boys getting into a particular trade, and its rules may provide that there shall be only one apprentice to two or three men. They want to keep it a close corporation. That has been the position in the past, and it is so to-day. Such organisations are afraid that it will mean less work for their present members.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: There would be no restrictions.

Mr. MOORE: This Bill goes further, and takes away the right of an individual to put his own son into his business. We strongly object to these harassing restrictions on business. The Minister says he wishes to protect the apprentice because he is not getting the opportunity to learn the trade to which he is indentured; but we know that is not the question. It is a question of placating an organisation which has come to the Minister and asked to have a loophole stopped. I object strongly to a measure such as this continually tightening up the law and preventing boys having opportunities to learn trades.

[Hon. D. A. Gledson.]

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*): I would like the Minister to make it quite clear whether this provision is going to apply to an agricultural industry. The sugar industry is working under an award, and at the present time general farming is threatened with a similar condition, as a claim is before the Board of Trade and Arbitration with a view to bringing it within the scope of the Industrial Arbitration Act. Now we have a proposal affecting—

“Any calling or industry to which this provision has been extended by an order of the Board of Trade and Arbitration made on the application of the Crown or an industrial union.”

Take the sugar industry. My interpretation of the Bill is that, if the Australian Workers' Union makes an application to the Board of Trade and Arbitration to have these provisions extended to the sugar industry, it is quite [9.30 p.m.] within the province of that tribunal to grant the request. It is a very common, and I think very laudable, practice in the sugar industry and other branches of agriculture for parents to take their sons into partnership; but, if this legislation is applied to the sugar industry, it will be a decided check upon a practice which has done more than any other system to keep the young men on the land. It will mean that the sons who are minors will not be able to start work before a certain hour in the morning, and at a certain hour in the evening they must cease work. I ask the Minister to give us an assurance that the provisions of this Bill are not to be applied to the industries I have mentioned. No worse time could have been selected in which to add to the difficulties confronting the sugar industry in the way of over-production. Hon. members opposite laugh and jeer at any hon. member on this side who dares to open his mouth on behalf of the farmers. I can quite understand that the Minister in charge of the Bill is ignorant of the subject, yet he should have the common courtesy to listen to those on this side who do know something about it. I hope that he will exercise his right of reply, and explain how the industries I have mentioned stand in the matter.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): This Bill might be termed a Bill of vindictive principles. The Minister has been able to conceal the motive of the Bill and the reasons prompting him in introducing it. He must realise that the Opposition have every reason to protect those who engage in industry, invest their money in industry, and are anxious that their children and others should have the same confidence in that business by sharing in the conduct of the business. The Minister seems to be of the opinion that it is a crime to control a business. At the back of his mind he has an idea of victimising by means of this Bill some unfortunate individual. By an application to the Board of Trade and Arbitration the Bill may be made to apply to any industry in order to deal with a minor against whom a labour organisation wishes to vent its spleen. That is the reason for the Bill.

I am sorry to think that the Minister is providing a further pinprick on industry when we know that, not only the sugar industry, as mentioned by the hon. member for Mirani, but every form of industry is passing through such straightened times that

the employer should be left alone in order to enable him to fight through present adversities successfully. We know that secondary industries are showing a tremendous expansion in the Southern States as compared with Queensland.

The SPEAKER: Order! Will the hon. member deal with the subject of the Bill?

Mr. CORSER: These pinpricks, in conjunction with others, are militating against the establishment of industries in Queensland, and will militate against the owners and masters of industries we already have in Queensland. We know that the Board of Trade and Arbitration have power to prescribe conditions which must be carried out by the employers. The Minister is not satisfied in that respect, and we now find him introducing additional facilities to penalise the employer. That is an unfortunate condition of affairs which we have come to in Queensland, and which we as an Opposition should not tolerate. We have no brief for any section of the community, and we are game to say on the floor of this House that we represent every section, and will exercise our rights and privileges even in the interests of the minor.

The SPEAKER: Order! If the hon. member does not deal more particularly with the Bill, I will order him to resume his seat. This is a simple Bill of one clause.

Mr. CORSER: I am dealing with the Bill more effectively than the Minister did his explanation.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr. CORSER: We have our rights, and it is our duty to protect the minor and protest against the provisions of this Bill, because it is aimed at the minor. If the Minister was of the opinion that he was legislating for a number of voters, very probably we would receive more consideration than we are doing.

Mr. HYNES: You are pleading for the unscrupulous employers.

Mr. CORSER: We are doing nothing of the kind. If any unscrupulous employers are evading the principles of the Industrial Arbitration Act and are dealing unjustly with any employee, why should not the Minister inform us of it?

The SPEAKER: Order! Order! Will the hon. member deal with the Bill?

Mr. CORSER: Oh, I will sit down.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member will be dealt with if he adopts an impertinent attitude.

Mr. CORSER: I will deal with you as severely as the Standing Orders will permit.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order! I will not have impertinence from the hon. member.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowong*): I quite agree with the attitude of the Leader of the Opposition in regard to this Bill. The only course to adopt in connection with this measure is to allow the Minister to have as much latitude as possible and he will wreck himself. I realise that this Bill has been introduced with the object of harassing industry. It is placing difficulties in the way of boys who desire to learn a trade. If the Minister continues the course he

Mr. Maxwell.]

is following, it will not be long before he accomplishes his object. I realise the necessity at the present time for giving every opportunity to boys to become apprentices in industry, and I do not believe in restricting that apprenticeship.

Mr. RIORDAN: You believe in sweating those boys.

Mr. MAXWELL: A good sweat would do the hon. member no harm, anyhow. (Laughter.)

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. MAXWELL: This is a serious subject. Numerous hon. members realise how difficult it is for our boys to learn a trade to-day. Restrictive and harassing legislation such as this will deter boys from learning trades. The Minister professes a lot of innocence in connection with the Bill. There is no one who knows better than he that there is a "nigger in the woodpile." Anything introduced by hon. members opposite should be closely scrutinised. The pity of it is that sufficient latitude is not given to hon. members opposite to put into operation their schemes and ideals. If that were done, people would soon realise whither we are wandering. Instead, hon. members opposite are obtaining their desire by "drips and drabs," and people do not realise the danger of the position. Finally, the people will wake up, realise the class of men who are governing this State, and promptly make a change.

Mr. ROBERTS (*East Toowoomba*): I realise how difficult it is for the youth of Queensland to learn a trade and to secure jobs. Whether that is brought under the notice of hon. members opposite I do not know, but every week it is brought under my notice in the city of Toowoomba, and the same thing happens in Brisbane. As one who has the interest of the youth of our State at heart, I very much regret the tone of this Bill, which has been termed a simple measure. What is it? Merely another means of restricting the opportunities of young men to become useful citizens. It is purely restrictive legislation.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It is to prevent unscrupulous employers sweating those youths.

Mr. ROBERTS: The lack of opportunity for our youths to become skilled tradesmen is lamentable. I can see that hundreds of our youths will grow to manhood unskilled, and that shiploads of artisans from other lands will have to be imported to do the jobs that should be done by young Australians.

It is all right for the Minister to say that there are certain individuals who may be minors who have tried to get ahead of the Apprenticeship Act. Why have they done it? It is not the minor who has done it. It has been the parent of the boy or girl who is anxious to secure an avenue of employment for his child, and he has entered into an agreement and found the £5 or £10 the hon. gentleman talks about in order to give the lad a chance in the State in which he has been born. He must start somewhere, or else he will become an unskilled labourer, and unfortunately we have too many unskilled labourers to-day. I can walk up Ruthven street in Toowoomba and count by the dozen boys who cannot get a job. They

do not get the opportunity. They might get an opportunity of being a parcel boy for a year or two, and then they are passed out. Australia must expand, and the opportunity will be there for these boys to become useful citizens if they are skilled tradesmen. I am totally opposed to the measure.

Mr. DASH (*Mundingburra*): I cannot understand the attitude of hon. members opposite. They know that the statements they have made in connection with this Bill are not true. This Bill is for the purpose of preventing the sweating of employees by unscrupulous employers who have a habit of taking these apprentices in as partners in the business and working them outside the award hours. There is nothing in the Bill to prevent any lad being apprenticed under the Apprenticeship Act. It has been within our knowledge for years that employers have been taking employees nominally into partnership, giving them four or five shares in a concern with 2,000 shares, and then working them overtime without pay and telling them that at the end of the year they will receive their dividend at the same ratio as other members of the firm. Unions have protested against that sort of thing, and rightly so. Why should minors be worked ten or eleven hours per day in an industry when they have no right to work longer than award hours? It is not fair to the decent employer who carries out the award.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: In what particular trades have difficulties arisen?

Mr. DASH: In several callings—butchers, for one.

Mr. KELSO (*Nundah*): The case put by the hon. member for Mundingburra is hardly applicable.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It is quite true, all the same.

Mr. KELSO: It may be true, but I would point out that the hon. member should be very particular in his quotations. He suggests that, in order to sweat a number of young fellows, they are given shares in a business. If that is so, they are not partners at all; they are shareholders in a public company.

This Bill deals purely with partnerships, which is an entirely different thing from being a shareholder in a company. We know that at the request or some union an application may be made to the Board of Trade and Arbitration by the Crown, by the employer, or by the employees' representative. The Government have found one or two little leakages, and on that account this matter is to be controlled by Act of Parliament. It is only another sample of some of the Acts previously passed and which have a very wide application. No provision is made, for instance, for the case of a father and son or any other relatives deciding to go into partnership, even if one of them is a minor. The Bill should provide for cases where a man—perhaps a pastoralist—decides that his son shall follow his business. What better teacher could a son have as he is growing up to a certain age than his father, uncle, or some other relative? Yet in this Bill there is no provision made for that sort of thing. This is only an example of a special measure brought in to meet some little leakage which has occurred. On the initiatory stages of the Bill, and during this

[*Mr. Maxwell.*]

debate, we have tried to get the Minister to give us some concrete examples in regard to cases, but we have not got the information yet. We hear something of a hearsay nature about certain things which are being done, and the hon. member for Mundingburra gave the whole show away. In the minds of hon. members opposite every employer is unscrupulous, and that is the class hatred which has been engendered here for some time.

Mr. HYNES: He never said that.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must deal with the principles of the Bill.

Mr. KELSO: I am showing that this Bill is a measure which is designed to suit a certain section. It is not likely that the Crown or the employer will operate under it, and the thing is mere surplusage. We might as well say that the trade unions want to stop anything being done—

Mr. HYNES: Why should the trade unions not protect their callings?

Mr. KELSO: This is like a boomerang, and we shall never know what it is going to hit. The Minister should protect interests other than those which hon. members opposite want protecting, and he would be well advised to accept an amendment in Committee in the direction I have indicated. We have pointed out the great hardship it will be if a father or other relative cannot take a relative who is a minor into partnership. We are told that certain industries are not being encouraged, and that the State is losing the brain power of its citizens because businesses are not developed. When men are willing to take their relatives into partnership in a business they have carried on themselves, for the benefit of the State they should be encouraged. We hold that a man who carries on business as an employer is an acquisition to the State, and, if we prevent these men in the future from providing that these operations may be carried on in future after they have gone, we shall be doing harm to the State. The Minister should recognise that we cannot pass an Act of Parliament to hit one particular class without hurting other large and varied interests in the State.

Mr. H. M. RUSSELL (*Toombul*): I think that both sides take up the position that both trade unions and employees must receive protection, and when anybody deliberately flouts an award it is up to the Legislature to see that they are protected. The Minister gave us no instance where a breach of the law had taken place, but he made the assertion that there were unscrupulous employers who, in order to avoid the provisions of the Apprenticeship Act, had taken in minors as partners with the object of sweating them. The Minister has exaggerated the position altogether, I am sure. Apart altogether from that, whilst he is anxious to do something to deal with one or two cases which he says have arisen, he is inflicting hardship on many innocent people in cases where employers have taken in minors as bona fide partners.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: What will hurt them?

Mr. H. M. RUSSELL: If an employer has a minor as a partner, he becomes an employee, and it hurts the firm.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: The firm, but not the minor!

Mr. H. M. RUSSELL: It may happen that, because there is a minor in the firm, it has to do with fewer apprentices.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: You want to sweat minors.

Mr. H. M. RUSSELL: There is no question of sweating minors. I deny that absolutely. The allegation is absolutely absurd. Hon. members would seek to make a case on a bare assertion, which should have no weight in this House. There is no justification for this drastic provision. If what the Minister says is occurring is actually occurring, there should be other means of bringing the offenders to book.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: How?

Mr. H. M. RUSSELL: I leave that to the Government. They have legal advisers to tell them how. The hon. member for Mundingburra endeavoured to explain, what the Minister had omitted to tell us, that the purpose of the Bill was to search out butchers who employed minors working in the firms concerned as shareholders for long hours and low wages. He should know that the fact that a man is a shareholder does not make him a partner. He must be treated as an ordinary employee. The Apprenticeship Act applies to any shareholder employed by a firm, therefore a shareholder does not come within the scope of this Bill. It would apply only in the case of partnerships. The Government could have obtained their object without resorting to such an extreme measure. The

[10 p.m.] Minister should give specific cases of where the law is being evaded in this respect. The Opposition are quite prepared to assist the Government to bring the malefactors to book, but we do not wish an injustice inflicted on innocent individuals. The Government do not care whom they injure so long as they achieve their object. I do not think it is fair that any person should be compelled, at the dictation of a trade union, to apply to the Board of Trade and Arbitration for exemption. The measure is certainly unwarranted, and will certainly interfere with the peaceful occupation of the people.

Mr. HYNES (*Townsville*): The hon. member for Toombul has advanced arguments why the measure is necessary. He said that it would be instrumental in reducing the number of juniors in industry. There is a growing practice amongst employers to defeat the operations of awards by taking in bogus partners and making minors partners in the firm. The Bill is intended to deal with those matters, and I am surprised at hon. members opposite taking up the cudgels on behalf of unscrupulous employers who indulge in this practice.

The hon. member for Toombul admitted that the Bill attacked a practice adopted by some employers who have made minors partners in order to sweat and underpay them. Private butcheries in my own electorate have adopted that practice. As a result minors, though nominally partners, receive no material benefits from the partnership, and are obliged to work almost the round of the clock without even receiving the benefits of the award. In many cases

Mr. Hynes.]

those junior partners are not even apprentices. European laundries subject to the award of the court have complained that similar conditions exist in Japanese laundries. I have been approached by some employers complaining of such unfair competition. I would like to see the Bill go further and apply awards to owners of industries to prevent them working outside award hours. Bogus partnerships are utilised to defeat the aims and objects of awards, and it is high time that something was done to prevent unscrupulous employers from sweating these so-called partners in industry.

Mr. WARREN (*Murrumba*): The first case cited by the hon. member for Townsville might be correct, but his second case is founded on hearsay. No young Australian will permit himself to be fooled or sweated. The Government are merely obeying the behests of the unions and legislating impossible conditions for industry. The Bill is all right from the standpoint of the professional agitator. There is no country in the world where so little sweating takes place as in Australia.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order! Will the hon. member deal with the Bill.

Mr. WARREN: The hon. member for Mirani has touched upon a very important point. It is possible that during the next few days the rural workers may come under the Industrial Arbitration Act, and, if that is done, the whole system will be destroyed. It would detrimentally affect the encouragement of young men to go on the land. Is the Minister so simple as to think that the farmer has not to learn a trade? His trade is much more difficult than that of carpentering or painting. The reason why there are so many failures in farming is because people do not learn the trade. If this Bill is carried as it stands, it will detrimentally affect our rural workers.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE (*Oxley*): We are indebted to the hon. members for Mundingburra and Townsville for their explanation as to the origin of this Bill. Apparently the measure is intended to prevent what is called the evasion of the Act by bogus partnerships. If a partnership is bogus, how can it evade the Act? It would be quite simple for the unions to prove that a partnership was bogus, therefore it could not avoid the Act.

If I understand the situation rightly, a minor may enter into a partnership, and he cannot be proceeded against as a member of that partnership, therefore he enjoys absolute freedom of action. He takes all the good of that partnership, but cannot be held liable for any of its obligations. Legally, he is in a happy position.

In this Bill I seem to smell something quite different, and that is that a man who becomes a partner in business depends on the doctrine of payment by results, and that is anathema to members opposite, who take their orders from the unions, and who in a great majority of cases have been union organisers. The principle of payment by results is to be stifled on every possible occasion. On this occasion we see quite clearly that a minor who enters into a partnership takes a very different view from one who is simply working as a machine under an Arbitration Court award. These minors are delighted to take advantage of the opportunity to become

partners, and in that capacity they can earn more than the award rates, and they become useful members of the business community. What do hon. members opposite care about the business members of the community? They use all their force and strength to disturb business if the power of the unions is likely to be impaired. Hon. members opposite are here to plead the cause of the unions so long as they have some automaton of a Minister who will put their ideas into effect.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY (Hon. D. A. Gledson, *Ipswich*): Mr. Speaker, I ask your protection from the insults of the hon. member for Oxley. I am not going to sit here and listen to insults like that.

The SPEAKER: Order! The word "automaton" is not unparliamentary, but as the Minister considers it offensive the hon. member must withdraw.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I did not say anything disrespectful. With all due deference to you, Sir, I merely called members of the Labour party "automatons," and I think that is the correct expression to apply to them in this connection.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member is not in order in using the term "automaton," and he must withdraw it.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I certainly did use the term "automaton," and if you direct that that should be withdrawn, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw it with pleasure for the peace of the House.

Mr. POLLOCK: I rise to a point of order.

Mr. CORSER: You are not going to run the House, too.

Mr. POLLOCK: I ask that the expression be withdrawn unreservedly.

Mr. CORSER: Are we to go down on our knees to you?

Mr. POLLOCK: I ask that the remark be withdrawn unreservedly.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member usually complies with the Standing Orders, and I ask him to withdraw unreservedly.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I am perfectly willing to submit to your wishes, Mr. Speaker, but I shall take no notice of hon. members opposite. I respect your independent directions, but, when you are dictated to by hon. members opposite, I withdraw with reluctance. It is perfectly obvious that this Bill has emanated from those two worthy representatives from Townsville, and we are indebted to those two hon. members for telling us what is implied in this Bill. This minor whom we are trying to protect has already all the protection he wants in the advantages which accrue to him from the position he holds. The effect of the Bill is that, if these young men under twenty-one years of age want to join a business where they can become employers—

Mr. HYNES: They are compelled to work under those conditions.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: It is ridiculous to say that anyone is compelled to work in Queensland. Hon. members opposite, who are typical of unionism, recognise that these young men are beginning to taste the sweets of making profits in business and becoming employers and securing their independence of unions.

[*Mr. Hynes.*

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): Apparently, a private butcher in Townsville has competed successfully with the State butchers up there, and that has caused the introduction of this measure.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. MORGAN: If we intend to carry on our industries in Queensland successfully and compete with industries in other parts of Australia, legislation of this sort should not be brought forward. It will only cause injury to the industries of the State. I may have a son, for instance, who attends to my grazing business while I am away from home, and I may desire to make him a partner; but, if I happen to have more juniors employed than are necessary, I cannot make him a partner. In order to make him a partner I would have to apprentice him to some other grazier in the locality. I desire to enter my emphatic protest against this measure. Hon. members opposite appear to be very touchy, and it is almost impossible for members of the Opposition to make any criticism at all. We used to be able to criticise measures without Ministers getting up and complaining about our criticism. I hope the Opposition will be able to make an effective protest against the Bill and that it will not become law.

Mr. RIORDAN (*Burke*): I am satisfied that it is time this party took some action to protect our child labour in Queensland. In the system of taking boys as partners there is undoubtedly opportunity for the unscrupulous employer to dodge awards. The hon. member for Oxley says that partnership agreements would have to be registered, but he must know that that difficulty is easily overcome. The hon. member may apprentice his son to the baking industry. The employer draws up an agreement to the effect that at the end of five years he will give him two shares in the business.

Mr. KING: What is he in the meantime?

Mr. RIORDAN: He is an apprentice, but once he is taken in as a partner he can work all round the clock, deliver bread at all hours, and keep a man out of work. The same thing applies in motor garages. A boy is taken in and given a nominal interest, and he can be used in driving lorries and teaching buyers of cars how to drive. He is getting no practical knowledge of the trade. It is noticeable that any measure for the betterment of the worker is opposed by the Opposition, who are getting more conservative every day. If this party stand for anything, they stand for teaching boys trades thoroughly; and the suggestion of the hon. member for Oxley that this Bill has been engineered by the hon. members for Townsville and Mundingburra is practically all bosh. There may be a couple of cases in Townsville, but the organisations which look after the interests of the industrialist can show him dozens of cases in the metropolitan area.

[10.30 p.m.]

The Opposition claim to stand by the law-abiding citizen. If they do, they will not permit any unscrupulous employer to have an advantage over a decent employer who is prepared to train our boys and make them competent tradesmen.

Mr. EDWARDS (*Nanango*): Evidently the hon. member for Burke is keen on perpetuating the party spirit and preventing the people of the community from working together in the interests of the State. That is a pitiful state of affairs. The Bill will have a more far-reaching and damaging effect than hon. members opposite seem to think. It will hit country businesses very hard indeed. To-day they are being throttled by large city business organisations, and the only way in which they can carry on is by employing their own families. The Minister is trying to prevent them doing that. Instead of helping to build up the country, the Government are creating monopolies in the large centres of population. The Bill will kill the country business man—

Mr. HYNES: The country sweater.

Mr. EDWARDS: I am sure that the hon. member for Townsville has never sweated in the interests of the State.

Mr. HYNES: If I did, I would not smell like you.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the hon. member for Townsville to withdraw the remark.

Mr. HYNES: In deference to you, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the remark.

The SPEAKER: I ask the hon. member to refrain from interjecting.

Mr. EDWARDS: It is regrettable that we have such members in this Chamber. It is impossible for country business to compete against the large establishments in the city that take advantage of the country order system, the parcel post system, and other means of distribution, unless they employ their own families. In the interests of decentralisation the Government should assist the people to work in co-operation. This measure, which has been forced on the House by outside interests, should be given more consideration by the Government than it has received, as some of their members must know that it will act detrimentally to the interests and welfare of this State.

Mr. KING (*Logan*): This Bill is a most unwarranted restriction on the liberty of the subject. While posing as democratic, the Government are denying the right of democracy that persons should do what they legitimately should be allowed to do. There may be some reason for this Bill to deal with bogus partnerships; but there are any number of cases of genuine partnerships with minors. A minor may enter into a partnership agreement which is quite in order. It is a perfectly legitimate partnership containing the usual covenants that the partnership will be carried on for a certain number of years; that the partners will give their whole time to the business; that proper books of accounts will be kept; and that at certain periods a division of profits will take place. The minor would probably get a smaller share than the principal partner. He may draw so much out of the business weekly, on account of his share of the profits, which may not be as much as the award rate, but none can say what profits that minor will receive at the end of six or twelve months.

Mr. DASH: Why should he work outside of award hours?

Mr. King.]

Mr. KING: Any partner may do that.

Mr. DASH: Isn't that at variance with the award?

The SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr. KING: These partnerships are not in the same category as those of which hon. members opposite are complaining. The Government are baiting a whale to catch a sprat, and making a mountain out of a molehill. Legislation of this sort is paltry in the extreme, and hon. members should not have their time occupied by such a measure when there is more important legislation to deal with.

Mr. WEIR (*Maryborough*): The hon. member for Logan evaded the point at issue. No right-minded person desires that there should be an invasion of the rights of legitimate partnerships, but there is nothing in this Bill that will deal harshly with genuine partnerships. The hon. member for Logan knows as well as anyone that minors in partnerships are not profitable propositions.

Mr. KING: I know, but we must take things as we find them.

Mr. WEIR: If that is so, there is a very sound reason why such a Bill as this should be put through, to see that such weaknesses are not taken advantage of.

Mr. KING: It may be a necessary course of action.

Mr. WEIR: And a very dangerous one. I quite appreciate the necessity to protect the rights of minors who enjoy partnership relationships.

Mr. KING: You are denying them that right.

Mr. WEIR: A young man, on attaining the age of twenty-one, may assume the rights to which he is entitled. While he is under the disability of minority he cannot be sued, and therefore should not enter the partnership arena. I am astounded that the Opposition cannot see that this measure will defend their people as well as those employed in industry. It is reasonably possible for two businesses in one line of business to work one in close proximity to each other, the one working under a minority partnership arrangement, and the other being fully bound by the award. Undoubtedly that gives the former concern an unfair advantage over competitors.

This Bill gives protection to the decent employer. The young fellow in a partnership also has a right to be protected. A man goes into partnership with a minor, and this Bill protects him from being sweated. The senior partner may be unscrupulous. What right has such a person to work the minor the rounds of the clock?

Mr. KING: He benefits by a share of the profits.

Mr. WEIR: Even there he is under a disability, because he cannot sue or be sued.

Mr. KING: He can sue by his next friend.

Mr. WEIR: I want to give him proper standing, such as should be given to the average Australian boy, and prevent him from being exploited by unscrupulous people.

Mr. G. P. BARNES (*Warwick*): I have no sympathy with the sweater, but I do fear there is something ulterior behind this Bill. I entered business when I was seventeen

years of age and became an employer; consequently, if I did not sympathise with those minors who become partners in a business, I would be acting contrary to my whole life. The fear behind this Bill is that it is going to interfere between the farmer and his son, and also with the general employer of labour who may wish to employ his son in his business. Can anyone call to mind where a man has been employed by another under some secret arrangement? Experience has proved that anyone who has attempted to do that has eventually found himself involved in legal proceedings, and he is not going to take the risk. If the Bill is going to be made applicable to rural life, it is going to be detrimental to the State and militate against our success, and therefore I stoutly protest against the passing of such a Bill.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time—put; and the House divided:—

AYES, 37.

Mr. Barber	Mr. Llewellyn
„ Bedford	„ Lloyd
„ Bruce	„ McCormack
„ Bulcock	„ McLachlan
„ Carter	„ Mullan
„ Collins	„ O'Keefe
„ Conroy	„ Payne
„ Cooper, F. A.	„ Pollock
„ Dash	„ Riordan
„ Dunstan	„ Ryan, C. J.
„ Ferricks	„ Ryan, H. J.
„ Foley	„ Smith
„ Gledson	„ Stopford
„ Hanlon	„ Weir
„ Hanson	„ Wellington
„ Hynes	„ Wilson
„ Jones	„ Winstanley
„ Kirwan	„ Wright
„ Larcombe	

Tellers: Mr. O'Keefe and Mr. C. J. Ryan.

NOES, 23.

Mr. Barnes, G. P.	Mr. Maxwell
„ Bell	„ Moore
„ Brand	„ Morgan
„ Clayton	„ Nott
„ Corser	„ Roberts
„ Deacon	„ Russell, H. M.
„ Edwards	„ Sizer
„ Elphinstone	„ Swayne
„ Kelso	„ Taylor
„ Kerr	„ Walker
„ King	„ Warren
„ Logan	

Tellers: Mr. Logan and Mr. Sizer.

PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Land	Mr. Atpel
„ Hartley	„ Barnes, W. H.

Resolved in the affirmative.

COMMITTEE.

(*Mr. Pollock, Gregory, in the chair.*)

Clause 1—“*Short title and commencement*”
—agreed to.

Clause 2—“*Amendment of section 4—Interpretation*”
—

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*): I protest against going on at this late hour with this important legislation. This is a measure which will have far-reaching consequences, and the time available for the passing of amendments is insufficient.

I beg to move the following amendment:—

“After line 34, page 2, add to the clause the words—

‘Provided that nothing in this Act contained shall apply to any agricultural, horticultural, dairying, or grazing industry.’”

[*Mr. King.*]

On the second reading the Minister did not give me an assurance that these industries would not be affected, and we can only conclude that they are aimed at by the Bill. In the agricultural industry a father often takes his sons in as partners; but, if a union applies to have the apprenticeship clauses applied to the industry and an order is made by the Board of Trade and Arbitration, it will be impossible for him to obtain any help from his child outside the four corners of an award. We all know how impossible that would be in the dairying industry, and to prove that I am not raising a false alarm, I have only to refer hon. members to a case now before the Board of Trade and Arbitration, in which an award is claimed for the workers in several rural industries, as reported in the daily papers. The sugar industry is already subject to the provisions of an award, and, unless this amendment is inserted in the Bill, it will be possible to apply these apprenticeship provisions to that and the other industries now before the Board. No better way could be devised for solving the problem of keeping the younger generation on the land than giving them an interest in their fathers' farms, but that would be impossible with this risk hanging over their heads. If this measure becomes law, intending immigrants with a small capital and families intending to work together in deciding between the States of Australia will certainly not decide on coming to Queensland. Already too many difficulties are placed in the way of those investing money in industry, and no further imposition should be made.

[11 p.m.]

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY (Hon. D. A. Gledson, *Ipswich*): I cannot accept the amendment. The callings to which this Bill can be made to apply are set out in the schedule to the Apprenticeship Act. None of the callings set out in the amendment is subject to the provisions of the Industrial Arbitration Acts or the Apprenticeship Act. The Bill makes provision for exempting industries that should not be subject to this legislation.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): I intend to support this very reasonable amendment. The contention by the Minister that industries can be exempt from the provisions of the Bill is not a sound contention. It is the policy of the Government to subject all industries to this legislation, and the amendment is moved to safeguard the industries mentioned therein. It would be impossible in the dairying and fruitgrowing industries to subject minors to the provisions of the Bill. If the Minister would investigate those industries, he would see that such a measure is unwarranted, and that they could not stand any further impositions. No injury is done to any industrial organisation or member of an industrial organisation by sons following in the footsteps of their fathers. The very best can be done for boys by allowing them to associate with their parents in business.

Mr. EDWARDS (*Nanango*): I hope the Minister will reconsider his decision not to accept the amendment. A claim for rural workers is now before the Board of Trade and Arbitration, and there is every possibility of an award being made.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: If this amendment is carried, it would be incompetent for the Board to deal with the claim now before it.

Mr. EDWARDS. That is not correct. The amendment clearly deals with agricultural industries as they come before the board. The Minister must realise that any further interference with the people on the land will make their conditions burdensome in the extreme.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY (Hon. D. A. Gledson, *Ipswich*): I rise to a point of order. Is the amendment moved by the hon. member for Mirani in order? The amendment seeks to insert words in the principal Act which are outside the scope of the order of leave.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment is quite in order.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): I appeal to the Minister not to proceed further with the Bill at this late hour, but to adjourn.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order! This is not the stage to discuss that matter.

Mr. MORGAN: I raise the question in the interests of economy, which the Premier is always preaching.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order! The hon. member must obey my call to order, or he will be compelled to resume his seat.

Mr. MORGAN: I support the amendment. The only way we can keep our sons on the land is to give them an interest in the selection. It is often said that the agriculturist does not treat his sons properly—that he sweats them. Very often he does not pay them wages, but he compensates them by granting them an interest in the farm. This Bill prevents a son obtaining such an interest until he reaches the age of twenty-one years, and will seriously injure the pastoral and agricultural industries. There may be some necessity for the Bill so far as the city is concerned, but that is not so in regard to rural industries.

Mr. HYNES: Don't you think a father should give his son at least the same conditions as he gives to strangers?

Mr. MORGAN: He would be only too pleased to give him better conditions, were it possible. It is a matter of £ s. d. Frequently the son prefers to sacrifice himself and remain at home to help his parents, who have done so much for him. He realises they cannot afford to give him proper wages, but very often he is taken into partnership. The son enters into that partnership in the hope that some day things will improve and the property will become valuable.

To-day there are hundreds of farmers' sons working on the land for the bare necessities of life owing to the fact that the land some day will go up in value, and that increased value will recompense them for the years they have spent on the land.

Mr. DEACON (*Cunningham*): If hon. members opposite clearly understood the conditions on the farm, they would recognise the value of this amendment. There seems to be a feeling of hostility on the Government

Mr. Deacon.]

side towards the farmer as an employer of members of his own family. We have heard hon. members opposite insinuate that the farmers are bad employers and that they are hard on their sons. They are not, and they treat their sons as well as they possibly can, as well as other fathers do. It is quite evident that there is a tendency, which is growing stronger every year, for the farmer to do away with labour, and there is a possibility under this Bill that the son will not be permitted to work on his father's farm.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Sugar-growers would be exempted under this amendment.

Mr. DEACON: Should a sugar farmer not employ his own son? Is he to employ another man's son in preference to his own? Is that what the hon. member wants? We know very well that the whole farming industry has been brought under the Industrial Arbitration Act, and an award may be made to-morrow, and then all farmers will be subject to the provisions of this measure. There may be a number of sons employed on the farm, and we want to make it quite clear that they are not included in the Bill. Hon. members opposite are trying to make a farmer employ other people in preference to his own sons. No country in the world can thrive and prosper unless it encourages the growing of food, as everything depends on that. It would be far better to accept the amendment and allow the farming industry to carry on with the least possible interference.

The CHAIRMAN: I made a mistake in ruling that the amendment is in order. After having examined it more closely, I have come to the conclusion that the point of order raised by the Minister can be sustained. If the amendment had said "Nothing contained in this section shall apply," it would have been in order; but, as the Act will be read as one with the Industrial Arbitration Act, it would be establishing an entirely new principle which is not provided for in the order of leave, and therefore the amendment is not in order.

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): Mr. Pollock, I move—

"That your ruling be disagreed to."

The amendment refers to the Bill we are now discussing, which is connected with agriculture. My point of order is that, owing to the fact that there is no award for the agricultural industry under the principal Act, this Bill will not apply to agricultural industries until an award is made.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: It will affect the sugar industry.

Mr. MORGAN: There are many agricultural industries in which no award has been made—I do not know whether the sugar industry is an agricultural industry. The Minister's point of order was that the amendment was not in order because it was contrary to the principal Act. I claim that it is not contrary to the principal Act because no award has yet been made with respect to agricultural industries. Owing to the fact that no award is made for certain rural industries we can employ what labour we like.

[*Mr. Deacon.*

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not speaking to the point of order he raised.

Mr. MORGAN: If the Board of Trade and Arbitration decides that no award shall be made for the industries mentioned in the amendment, then this Bill will not apply to them.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Perhaps the hon. member might listen for a moment while I explain the reason for my ruling. The initiation of the Bill in Committee gave to the House power to amend the Industrial Arbitration Acts "in a certain particular." That particular is set forth in the Bill itself. The amendment seeks to amend the Bill by adding to it—

"Provided that nothing in this Act contained shall apply to any agricultural, horticultural, dairying, or grazing industry."

I emphasise the words "nothing in this Act contained." Clause 1 of the Bill reads—

"This Act may be cited as the Industrial Arbitration Acts Amendment Act of 1926, and shall be read as one with the Industrial Arbitration Acts, 1916 to 1925, herein collectively referred to as the principal Act."

Therefore, if this amendment were agreed to, it would have the effect of providing that "nothing in the Industrial Arbitration Acts, 1916 to 1925, shall apply to any agricultural industry." That would be amending the principal Act in a particular outside that allowed for in the order of leave. The hon. member, in stating his point of order, must speak to that particular matter.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*): It is perfectly right to say that the Bill amends the Act in a certain particular—that is, in regard to the apprenticeship provisions, and it applies to any calling or industry to which it is extended by order of the Board of Trade and Arbitration. It seems to me perfectly competent for the Committee to exempt any calling or industry from those to be affected by the apprenticeship provisions. In any case, if the amendment is out of order, the responsibility rests with the Government, who allowed us no time to prepare our amendments.

[11.30 p.m.]

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): The amendment has application only to the definition of "employee" and not to the general principles of the Industrial Arbitration Acts of 1916 to 1925, as they may affect the agricultural industry. Therefore, Mr. Pollock, your ruling is not a sound one.

Question—That the Chairman's ruling be disagreed to—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 22.

Mr. Barnes, G. P.	Mr. Maxwell
" Bell	" Moore
" Brand	" Morgan
" Clayton	" Nott
" Corser	" Roberts
" Deacon	" Russell, H. M.
" Edwards	" Sizer
" Kelso	" Swayne
" Kerr	" Taylor
" King	" Walker
" Logan	" Warren

Tellers: Mr. Kerr and Mr. Sizer.

NOES, 34.

Mr. Barber	Mr. Llewelyn
„ Bedford	„ Lloyd
„ Bertram	„ McCormack
„ Bruce	„ McLachlan
„ Carter	„ Mullan
„ Collins	„ O'Keefe
„ Dash	„ Payne
„ Dunstan	„ Riordan
„ Ferricks	„ Ryan, C. J.
„ Foley	„ Ryan, H. J.
„ Gledson	„ Smith
„ Hanlon	„ Stopford
„ Hanson	„ Weir
„ Hynes	„ Wellington
„ Jones	„ Wilson
„ Kirwan	„ Winstanley
„ Larcombe	„ Wright

Tellers: Mr. Dash and Mr. Wright.

PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Appel	Mr. Land
„ Barnes, W. H.	„ Hartley

Resolved in the negative.

Question stated—That clause 2 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. KELSO (*Nundah*): Mr. Pollock—

The PREMIER (Hon. W. McCormack, *Cairns*): Mr. Pollock, I move—

“That the question be now put.”

Question—That the question be now put—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 34.

Mr. Barber	Mr. Llewelyn
„ Bedford	„ Lloyd
„ Bertram	„ McCormack
„ Bruce	„ McLachlan
„ Carter	„ Mullan
„ Collins	„ O'Keefe
„ Dash	„ Payne
„ Dunstan	„ Riordan
„ Ferricks	„ Ryan, C. J.
„ Foley	„ Ryan, H. J.
„ Gledson	„ Smith
„ Hanlon	„ Stopford
„ Hanson	„ Weir
„ Hynes	„ Wellington
„ Jones	„ Wilson
„ Kirwan	„ Winstanley
„ Larcombe	„ Wright

Tellers: Mr. Hanlon and Mr. Hanson.

NOES, 22.

Mr. Barnes, G. P.	Mr. Maxwell
„ Bell	„ Moore
„ Brand	„ Morgan
„ Clayton	„ Nott
„ Corser	„ Roberts
„ Deacon	„ Russell, H. M.
„ Edwards	„ Sizer
„ Kelso	„ Swayne
„ Kerr	„ Taylor
„ King	„ Walker
„ Logan	„ Warren

Tellers: Mr. Logan and Mr. H. M. Russell.

PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Land	Mr. Appel
„ Hartley	„ Barnes, W. H.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Question—That clause 2, as read, stand part of the Bill—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 35.

Mr. Barber	Mr. Llewelyn
„ Bedford	„ Lloyd
„ Bertram	„ McCormack
„ Bruce	„ McLachlan
„ Carter	„ Mullan
„ Collins	„ O'Keefe
„ Conroy	„ Payne
„ Dash	„ Riordan
„ Dunstan	„ Ryan, C. J.
„ Ferricks	„ Ryan, H. J.
„ Foley	„ Smith
„ Gledson	„ Stopford
„ Hanlon	„ Weir
„ Hanson	„ Wellington
„ Hynes	„ Wilson
„ Jones	„ Winstanley
„ Kirwan	„ Wright
„ Larcombe	

Tellers: Mr. Lloyd and Mr. Riordan.

NOES, 22.

Mr. Barnes, G. P.	Mr. Maxwell
„ Bell	„ Moore
„ Brand	„ Morgan
„ Clayton	„ Nott
„ Corser	„ Roberts
„ Deacon	„ Russell, H. M.
„ Edwards	„ Sizer
„ Kelso	„ Swayne
„ Kerr	„ Taylor
„ King	„ Walker
„ Logan	„ Warren

Tellers: Mr. Corser and Mr. Edwards.

PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Land	Mr. Appel
„ Hartley	„ Baroes, W. H.

Resolved in the affirmative.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported the Bill without amendment.

THIRD READING.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY (Hon. D. A. Gledson, *Ipswich*): I beg to move—

“That the Bill be now read a third time.”

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*): I beg to move the following amendment:—

“Omit the word—

‘now,’

and add to the motion the words—

‘this day six months.’”

The third reading should be postponed pending the decision of the Board of Trade and Arbitration, which is at present inquiring into an application for an award in the rural industry. I also move the amendment because of the indecent haste with which the Bill has been rushed through. It is important legislation, and it is impossible at the short notice given for us to foresee how far-reaching its effect will be. The Bill will have a most disturbing effect on our industries, and it is advisable that we should have a further six months for its consideration.

Question—That the word proposed to be omitted (*Mr. Swayne's amendment*) stand

Mr. Swayne.]

part of the question—put; and the House divided:—

AYES 35.

Mr. Barber	Mr. Lloyd
„ Bedford	„ McCormack
„ Bruce	„ McLachlan
„ Carter	„ Mullan
„ Collins	„ O'Keefe
„ Conroy	„ Payne
„ Dash	„ Pollock
„ Dunstan	„ Riordan
„ Ferricks	„ Ryan, C. J.
„ Foley	„ Ryan, H. J.
„ Gledson	„ Smith
„ Hanlon	„ Stopford
„ Hanson	„ Weir
„ Hynes	„ Wellington
„ Jones	„ Wilson
„ Kirwan	„ Winstanley
„ Larcombe	„ Wright
„ Llewelyn	

Tellers: Mr. Conroy and Mr. Dash.

NOES, 22.

Mr. Barnes, G. P.	Mr. Maxwell
„ Bell	„ Moore
„ Brand	„ Morgan
„ Clayton	„ Nott
„ Corser	„ Roberts
„ Deacon	„ Russell, H. M.
„ Edwards	„ Sizer
„ Kelso	„ Swayne
„ Kerr	„ Taylor
„ King	„ Walker
„ Logan	„ Warren

Tellers: Mr. Brand and Mr. Clayton.

PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Land	Mr. Appel
„ Hartley	„ Barnes, W. H.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Question—That the Bill be now read a third time—put and passed.

PUBLIC CURATOR ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. J. Mullan, *Flinders*): As I said previously, the object of this Bill is to provide machinery by which Deputy Public Curators can be appointed at centres other than Brisbane, Rockhampton, and Townsville. We have power to appoint deputies in South Queensland, Central Queensland, and North Queensland, but they would have to be located in Brisbane, Rockhampton, and Townsville. If we wanted to appoint one at Mackay or Cairns we could not do so.

Mr. MOORE: Will they be clerks of petty sessions?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: No. Where deputies are needed the work will be too great to be carried out by the clerks of petty sessions in addition to their own duties. In cases where clerks of petty sessions do any of the work they will be merely agents and not deputies of the Public Curator.

[12 p.m.]

I beg to move—

“That the Bill be now read a second time.”

Question put and passed.

[*Hon. J. Mullan.*]

COMMITTEE.

(*Mr. Riordan, Burke, one of the panel of Temporary Chairmen, in the chair.*)

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.

The House resumed.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN reported the Bill without amendment.

THIRD READING.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. J. Mullan, *Flinders*): I beg to move—

“That the Bill be now read a third time.”

Question put and passed.

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH (TOOWOOMBA) LAND SALE ACT OF 1912 AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. J. Mullan, *Flinders*): The object of the principal Act was to allow the Evangelical Lutheran Church to sell certain land in Toowoomba and devote the proceeds to church purposes. At that time the land was vested in three trustees, and they sold the land to one of the members of the church and his wife. Subsequently the wife died, leaving her interest in the land to her husband, who proceeded to transfer the land into his own name to bring it under the Real Property Act. It was then discovered that the conveyance wrongly described the land, and, as the conveyance was based upon the Act of 1912, we made further inquiry into the matter and found that the Act itself wrongly described the land. The land was described as “subdivision 1 of suburban allotment 19 of section 9, instead of “subdivision 1 of suburban allotment No. 18 of section 9.” It was found that nothing could be done to remedy the situation without legislation.

Mr. KING: It was not under the Act?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: It was not under the Real Property Act. That was, it was not under the new system. The Government must accept responsibility for the error, and it was thought only fair to give this man his title to the land. That really is the object of the Bill. I would like to point out that even in the bad old days with Select Committees and the Upper House Parliament was not infallible.

Mr. TAYLOR: Is it now?

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time—put and passed.

COMMITTEE.

(*Mr. Pollock, Gregory, in the chair.*)

Clauses 1, 2, and 3, and preamble, agreed to.

The House resumed.

The Chairman reported the Bill without amendment.

THIRD READING.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. J. Mullan, *Flinders*): I beg to move—

“That the Bill be now read a third time.”

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at 12.10 a.m.