

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**TUESDAY, 2 OCTOBER 1945**

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**TUESDAY, 2 OCTOBER, 1945.**

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. S. J. Brassington, Fortitude Valley) took the chair at 11 a.m.

QUESTIONS.

UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS AND EXAMINATIONS.

**Mr. PATERSON** (Bowen) asked the Secretary for Public Instruction—

“With respect to the years 1915, 1925, 1935, and 1945—

‘1. How many scholarships to the University were available?’

‘2. How many students were there in attendance at the University?’

‘3. How many persons sat for the Senior University public examinations?’

‘4. What was the amount of the scholarship allowance?’”

**Hon. J. LARCOMBE** (Rockhampton—Secretary for Public Instruction) replied—

“1 to 4. The information is being prepared.”

LAND FOR SOLDIER SETTLEMENT.

**Mr. AIKENS** (Mundingburra) asked the Acting Premier—

“1. What is the area of land proposed to be made available for soldier settlement?”

“2. What is the location of such land?”

“3. Will he supply any other information on the matter of soldier settlement?””

**Hon. E. M. HANLON** (Ithaca—Acting Premier) replied—

“1 and 2. I refer the hon. member to the information furnished to the Leader of the Opposition by the Hon. the Secretary for Public Lands, in answer to Mr. Nicklin’s question on the 18th ultimo.

“3. Full information will be given to Parliament when the necessary legislation is introduced.”

ACTING PREMIER’S STATEMENT ON LIQUOR ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

**Mr. PIE** (Windsor), without notice, asked the Acting Premier—

“(a) Has he seen the statement appearing in the ‘Courier-Mail’ of the 28th instant, headed ‘Hanlon Switch on Drinking?’

“(b) If so can he give any sound reason regarding his changed attitude?”

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order! The hon. member’s question is rather personal. However, I shall allow him to proceed.

**Mr. PIE:** The question continues—

“(b) If so, can he give any sound reason regarding his changed attitude between 1941 and 1945 on the Continental method of drinking.

“(c) Has consultation with outside interests been a contributing factor in his altered opinion?”

**Hon. E. M. HANLON** (Ithaca—Acting Premier) replied—

“The answer to the hon. member’s question is that the conditions existing in 1945 in no way resemble the conditions existing in 1941. In 1941 there were ample supplies of all kinds of liquid refreshments and consequently the conditions then existing are not the conditions of today.

“With regard to the consultation with outside interests, I should just like to point out that the hon. member fails to realise the difference between a democratic party such as the Labour Party, founded upon the support and co-operation of the great mass of working people, and the usual financial gangs of go-getters who operate behind closed doors when seeking advantages for themselves. This party has its contacts with the people from Cape York to Coolangatta and to the Northern Territory border through the working people of the community, of whom there are many thousands in all parts of the State. They are the people who frame the policy of the Labour Party and this Government. They are the people whom this Government set out to serve. I can assure the hon. member that under no circumstances will or could a party such as the Labour Party indulge in the practices carried on by the party to which he belongs.”

PAPERS.

The following papers were laid on the table and ordered to be printed:—

Report of the Licensing Commission for the year 1944-1945.

Sixtieth Report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies, Building Societies, and Industrial and Provident Societies.

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Order in Council under the State Development and Public Works Organisation Acts, 1938 to 1940 (20 September, 1945).

Regulations under the Workers’ Compensation Acts, 1916 to 1944 (13 September, 1945).

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

**Mr. MAHER** (West Moreton) (11.4 a.m.), by leave: I wish to make a personal explanation. I find in ‘Hausard,’ No. 13, page 513, during the speech of the hon. member for Carnarvon, who was advocating the construction of a standard-gauge railway from Boggabilla, via Goondiwindi, Miles, Blair Athol to North Australia, I am quoted as having said by way of interjection, “That is the only sensible alternative.”

**Mr. Devries:** You did, too.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr. MAHER:** The hon. member is not correct. I wish to point out to the House the actual words used by me were as follows:—

“That is the only sensible route.”

The Brisbane “*Courier-Mail*” of Friday, 28 September, reported the interjection correctly. It is important that this correction be made as I am very strongly opposed to Sir Harold Clapp’s recommended route and the “*Hansard*” version implies that I favoured his recommendation. There is no “*alternative*” about it as far as I am concerned. I believe the route from Boggabilla, through Goondiwindi, Miles, Taroom, and Blair Athol and thence to any suitable point on the railroad connecting Cloncurry with Charters Towers would give the best value for the money expended, as this route will serve the developmental needs of the State and military requirements as well.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order! The hon. member is getting outside the limits of a personal explanation.

#### CO-ORDINATION OF RURAL ADVANCES AND AGRICULTURAL BANK ACTS AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

##### SECOND READING.

**Hon. E. M. HANLON** (Ithaca—Treasurer) (11.10 a.m.): I move—

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

This Bill was very fully explained on its introduction and nothing much can be added to what was said then.

This is really a proposal that will enable discharged servicemen and servicewomen who have served their country during the war to obtain advances from the Agricultural Bank under the most favourable conditions. The conditions laid down are that advances up to a maximum amount of £5,000 may be made and that interest shall not be chargeable or payable for the first three years of the loan, nor shall any repayments of principal be payable during that period. In addition to the freedom from any repayment for the first three years, a further period of five years is provided for during which interest only will have to be paid. Therefore, it will not be till the expiration of eight years that repayments of both interest and redemption will have to be made. That period of eight years will be in addition to the 30-year period on which the ordinary loan is based, so that the total period will be 38 years, thus making the repayments as light as possible. Of course, there will be nothing to prevent a settler who is successful from paying off his liability as soon as possible. The sooner he liquidates his liability to the Crown, of course, the sooner he will be independent.

This money will be made available for either the development of new land or the purchase of property that has already been developed. No distinction will be made in that respect.

Furthermore, the widest possible meaning is given to the term “*war service*.” Anybody who has actually given his or her services to the country during the currency of the war, whether male or female, will be eligible to participate in the benefits given by the Bill, and it will not be restricted to Queensland members of the services. Members of the services from any part of the Commonwealth will be entitled to take advantage of this legislation. Of course, the property in respect of which the advance is made must be situated in Queensland. It will be understood by everybody that the Agricultural Bank of Queensland would not extend its operations outside of the State.

**Mr. NICKLIN** (Murrumba—Leader of the Opposition) (11.13 a.m.): I am sure all hon. members will agree that this legislation is particularly important and deserves the fullest consideration. It is an effort by the State to fill the gap between the discharge of servicemen and the giving of assistance to them by Governments that has been caused by the unwarranted delay on the part of the Commonwealth Government in doing something to implement land settlement schemes for members of the forces. The only conclusion to which one can come is that the Commonwealth Government, notwithstanding their constant propaganda over the years, were caught unprepared by the sudden termination of the war. As a result, instead of having schemes available for soldiers—and many hundreds of them have already been discharged from the forces—we find that the Commonwealth Government have done virtually nothing up to the present, in spite of the fact that they had before them in January, 1944, the report of the Rural Reconstruction Committee on land settlement for members of the fighting services.

So far the Commonwealth Government have made nothing available in this connection to meet the requirements of the many hundreds of servicemen and servicewomen who will be discharged from the forces and so this legislation introduced by the Treasurer will serve a useful purpose in that it will enable a certain number of servicemen to receive assistance and thus will fill the gap pending the completion of the Commonwealth’s and the Commonwealth and the States’ joint schemes.

When we come to study the Bill, however, we find that although it offers a measure of help to the serviceman, nevertheless it is not a wonderful advance on the help already available to the ordinary borrower from the Agricultural Bank. The only real difference between the conditions applicable to the ordinary borrower and the serviceman is the interest-free period of three years. Under section 27 of the Act as amended in 1943 the ordinary borrower can be allowed 30 years for repayment exclusive of any period allowed by the corporation not exceeding five years during which interest only is payable. Therefore when we compare the terms offered by the Bill to the serviceman with those already available to the ordinary settler we find that there is not such a great difference after all.

The following is the comparison, and a very interesting one too:—

	Ordinary Soldier. Years.	Borrower. Years.
Maximum term of advance	30	30
Interest-free period allowable by bank .. ..	5	5
Period during which neither principal nor interest is payable .. ..	3	..
Maximum term .. ..	38	35

In other States, notably Victoria, legislation has been introduced to help soldier settlers, who have received an interest concession and it is a question whether this State could not have extended the privilege given to the servicemen here, particularly for that five-year interest-free period allowed at the discretion of the bank, which is in addition to the three years in which neither interest nor principal is payable. When we consider the financial position of the State, after hearing the Budget presented by the Treasurer the other day, we must conclude that the Treasurer is not hard up and that he could have given serious consideration to my suggestion. If he had considered it I am sure that he could have arrived at only one conclusion.

That is to say, he is financially capable of giving some greater interest concession than that provided for in the Bill.

The State Government have in their Post-war Reconstruction and Development Trust Fund at the present time approximately £9,240,000, of which £3,350,000 has been reserved for railway purposes. It is interesting to note that the interest earned in 1944-45 on the part of this fund that was invested was £189,240, equal to only 2.2 per cent. per annum. It would have been quite easy, seeing that the money was earning only that low rate of interest, to have made a part of it available to the Agricultural Bank to extend to service borrowers for at least a period a lower rate of interest than that charged at the present time, namely, 4 per cent. Had the Treasurer done that I am sure he would have very greatly increased the value of this legislation to soldier settlers.

We need to consider what is the best form of financial assistance to be given to soldier settlers. The question was discussed by the Rural Reconstruction Committee in its inquiries into this matter whether the assistance should be given by remission of capital early in the borrowing period or by substantial interest reductions early in that period. The committee came to the decision that if the qualifications, experience and capacity of the settlers were satisfactory, lack of capital should not be a bar and this disability should be overcome mainly by interest concessions to operate until financial stability was reached. That is a very sound finding. It is the principle that has been followed by the Treasurer in this legislation. In it he has given a period in which neither principal nor interest is payable in the early

period of the loan. When we bear in mind the importance of financial assistance during the period of establishment we realise that action such as this may save writing down capital indebtedness later on. It is hard to become established on the land, particularly if you have a shortage of capital.

We must remember, too, that most soldiers who are purchasing properties at the moment will be taking them over at a period when the prices of most agricultural products are high and when land values are particularly high. We must not overlook the fact that in the years to come we shall have to face a period of reduced prices for our primary products. That emphasises my point that the early part of the period of these loans will be the most important in giving assistance to the settler. So I say that the practice adopted in this legislation of making a concession to the borrowers early will be of great assistance to them.

The Treasurer, in introducing this legislation has evidently taken into account the recommendations made by the Rural Reconstruction Committee. I can speak from personal experience in this matter. I was a borrower under the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Acts after the last war. I had no capital and I bought at a period of high prices, and as prices fell in the years following the war I found great difficulty in meeting my commitments to the Agricultural Bank. An interest-free period such as is available under this legislation certainly would have been a great help to me. That was the experience of many soldier settlers at that time.

This legislation is designed to help members of the services to buy properties they have selected themselves and to finance them on those properties or, alternatively, to give them financial assistance in respect of properties they may own. It does not deal with the form of settlement that will be considered by this House later on, when the Commonwealth Government make up their minds about what they are going to do to assist soldier settlement, that is, when the settlement schemes operate under which land is acquired and made available to soldier settlers.

It is interesting to note, in connection with the question of assisting soldier settlers to buy properties they have selected themselves, that the Rural Reconstruction Committee reported adversely against anything of this kind; and it based that finding apparently on the fact that after the last war prices were paid for farms privately purchased that were altogether too high. I disagree with that finding, because although there were failures among soldier settlers who received help for the purpose of buying privately selected farms, there were also failures among soldier settlers who were put on farms ready-made for them by the various soldier-settlement authorities at that time. I venture to say that a greater majority of soldier settlers who selected their own properties were successful than those who were placed on Government-sponsored settlements. The Rural

Reconstruction Committee found that if a soldier settler wished to select a farm held by a private person, it should be acquired by the authority set up under Commonwealth or State law, and dealt with as part of a group soldier-settlement scheme. I do not agree with that principle. I maintain that if care is used in the inspection of the properties before advances are made there will not be an undue percentage of failures in settlement of that kind.

I do emphasise the point that care is needed in making advances for this class of property. As this legislation deals entirely with such advance no doubt the Treasurer and the officials of the Agricultural Bank have given every consideration to this aspect. As I emphasised a moment ago, any purchase of property that is made just now will be made at more or less inflated values.

No matter what anybody may say about the price-pegging regulations, which I think were issued by the Commonwealth in 1941, to hold prices of land, everyone who has had any experience of land sales in recent years knows that prices have been gradually rising and at the present time are considerably inflated. Any soldier or for that matter anybody purchasing at the present time has to be exceedingly careful to see that the property is not over-valued and consequently over-capitalised. I take this opportunity of emphasising this fact to the Treasurer and requesting him to see to it that the closest inquiry is made as to the value of the land involved in any purchase and so make the advances under this legislation as sound as it is possible to have them.

A large number of servicemen are being discharged who prior to the war held properties of their own. These men fall into various classes. There is the man who prior to enlistment had a property that was not paying and is perhaps still carrying a heavy burden; he may not be likely to be successful, no matter how much further help we give him.

**Mr. Macdonald:** On marginal country.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** As the hon. member for Stanley reminds me, he may be on marginal country. I think it would be a kindness to that borrower, rather than make him further advances and perhaps let him get further into the soup, to ascertain if some arrangement could not be made to transfer him to other land and start him off afresh under the provisions of this Bill. That is the only sound way to handle a man in that position.

Then there is the fellow who left a good farm to do his bit for his country and now finds that because of his absence the farm has slipped back. A case like that should receive first priority in any assistance that can be given under this legislation. In this class I should place also the farmer whose property is in a reasonably good position at the moment but requires advances for plant and stock to bring it up to high productivity. These men are entitled to the highest priority. They are practical men and

more or less established. They have their properties and the only reason why they are not fully profitable at the moment is the fact that they went away and served their country.

**Mr. Walsh:** Do you think they get a better spin under the Agricultural Bank than they do from private banks?

**Mr. NICKLIN:** That is a matter of opinion.

**Mr. Hanlon:** There is only one opinion.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I am not condemning the assistance given by either the Agricultural Bank or private banks. Both have rendered good service to the primary producers in Queensland and no doubt will continue to do so, but later in my speech, for the information of the Minister for Transport, I wish to emphasise one of the great weaknesses of the Agricultural Bank as compared with private banks and to suggest to the Treasurer means by which that very evident weakness can be overcome.

The interjection by the Minister for Transport has reminded me of an important question that arises here. Because no facilities have been available to servicemen up to the present for receiving any government aid to enable them to go on the land, many soldiers have obtained advances from private banks, private persons and financial institutions. The result is that perhaps they have not received terms as favourable as those offering under this legislation. I hope that when administering this Bill the Treasurer will give favourable consideration to any of those soldiers who may apply to have their liabilities transferred from where they are now accommodated to the Agricultural Bank. In the past the policy of the bank has been not to accept the transfer of liabilities from private banks to itself, its attitude being that those settlers have been arranged for financially and its money could be better employed in meeting fresh applications. There may be a good deal in that attitude, but under this legislation servicemen will have the advantage of an interest-free period of three years, and this is important when they are endeavouring to establish themselves. Consequently, if because they tired of waiting for governmental aid to go on the land, some soldiers have obtained advances from other sources and are not in a position to meet all their liabilities as comfortably as they could under the scheme that will be available on the passage of this Bill, I suggest that the policy of the bank be altered and that the fullest consideration be given to those soldier settlers who desire to transfer from where they are now accommodated to the Agricultural Bank.

In all soldier-settlement schemes great emphasis is laid on the suitability of the borrower but up to the present the Treasurer has made no reference to this point. I should like to know what test of adaptability or suitability is to be made by the Agricultural Bank when an application for an advance is made by a serviceman. I suggest that the

bank officers be not too hidebound in their decisions. In the report of the Rural Reconstruction Committee, great emphasis is laid on the fact that applicants should have previous knowledge or previous training on the land. No doubt that is a great help, but some of the most successful soldier settlers after the last war were men who had no previous experience on the land but made good because of their adaptability and intelligence.

However, I have sufficient confidence in the officers of the Agricultural Bank to believe that they will be careful to take into account the suitability of any applicant and that they will not be too hidebound about stipulating that a man must have had previous training or knowledge as long as he looks capable of making a success of the undertaking.

Another matter on which I want to touch briefly is the question how these applicants will be financed. Some of them may wish to buy ready-made farms. These will have properties fully productive at the time of purchase or that can be made fully productive by the expenditure of additional money on improvements to plant, stock and equipment. Other men may wish to buy blocks that are not already in production. I take it that a borrower who is beginning on an unproductive block will be financed progressively according to his need for improvements, and that the whole of the amount will not be made available to him at the outset.

**Mr. Hanlon:** It would be in the interests of the settler to do that.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** As the Treasurer has just said, I think that would be in the interests of the settler.

Now I come to the point that I stated I would touch on earlier when the Minister interjected, that is, the weakness of the present set-up of the Agricultural Bank. That weakness lies in the lack of personal contact with borrowers and of supervision over their activities. That is a big advantage that the private banks have over the Agricultural Bank. The loans made by private banks to settlers are treated more or less as personal matters and constant contact is maintained between the branch manager of the bank and the borrower.

At 11.43 a.m.,

The CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES (Mr. Mann, Brisbane) relieved Mr. Speaker in the chair.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** In many instances, the field officers attached to the Agricultural Bank are not practical men and they lack sympathy with borrowers. I emphasise that the success of the activities of the Agricultural Bank in the handling of soldier settlement will revolve very largely round the selection of a suitable field staff who will keep in touch with the borrowers. When a settler gets into a spot of bother and wants advice, it is no use merely writing him a letter from the office. Many a man who is working on the land has not the necessary time or energy to conduct

lengthy correspondence with officers who are situated many miles away from his home. As a result—and again I am speaking now from personal experience—situations often develop between the Agricultural Bank and its borrowers that would never have developed had there been more personal contact between the field staff and the borrowers.

I hope that efforts will be made to increase the field staff and that practical men will be selected who will have a certain amount of human understanding and sympathy. After all we must realise that many of the returned soldiers who are to be assisted by this legislation will be going through a difficult period, particularly in the early years of their loans, a period of readjustment and a period when the whole of their future may be wrecked for the lack of a little of the sympathetic timely consideration and personal contact between them and the bank. It is likely that with such help there will be a greater number of successful settlers than there will be if the bank merely conducts a lengthy correspondence with its settler clients.

Let me quote one instance to illustrate what I have in mind, an instance that occurred after the last war. It was brought about by one of the field officers of the Agricultural Bank who did not have enough experience of the class of country in which he was asked to deal. A soldier on the North Coast was endeavouring by growing lantana to rejuvenate his land for the purpose of banana-growing. Anybody conversant with the class of country knows there is no better way of rejuvenating it. This inspector came along and saw the lantana, and as lantana is a noxious weed, according to the regulations, he immediately ordered that settler to clear it from his property. Fortunately, however, representations to the bank caused another inspector to be sent, one who had a knowledge of local conditions, one who knew the value of that treatment, and so the previous order to clear the land of lantana was cancelled and everything once again was merry and bright. I quote that instance just to show what can happen when a member of the field staff is not possessed of the requisite knowledge of local conditions and what difficulties could be created for the soldier settler by an incompetent field staff. If we are to make the Agricultural Bank the help such an institution should be to soldier settlers we shall have to increase the number on the field staff and, more important still, we must see that they are competent to do the job allotted to them.

**Mr. Devries:** Scientific research.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** It would be a great advantage if the field staff of the Agricultural Bank had some scientific knowledge and if they had in addition some practical knowledge combined with an understanding of human nature. Then they would be able to overcome many of the little difficulties that if not attended to may develop into big ones and so wreck the future of soldier settlers.

At 11.48 a.m.,

Mr. SPEAKER resumed the chair.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** The Treasurer emphasised that the Bill was designed to help the men and women of the fighting services and I was pleased to hear him include the women. However, I should like to suggest that he go even further and include members of the Land Army.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. NICKLIN:** The Land Army is not classed as a fighting service, but it is an organisation that has done a marvellous job on the home front.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. NICKLIN:** Those girls have been denied many of the privileges that have been given to the girls in the fighting services. I should say that the practical knowledge of land work they have acquired together with the example they have given of their ability to run properties throughout the length and breadth of the State very successfully, justifies us in bringing them under this legislation on the same terms as the women of the fighting services. Perhaps the Treasurer can bring them in under the clause whereby the Bill can be extended to other persons. On the introductory stage he said this provision was designed to cover members of the forces of Great Britain and the sister Dominions. I strongly appeal to the Treasurer to give serious consideration to this question.

This Bill, in addition to making provision for soldier settlement, deals also with the granting of further aid to producers to enable them to buy additional machinery and increases the amount of money available to a co-operative association for the purpose of buying machinery or forming machinery groups in its area to improve production methods and increase productivity. Those are provisions all hon. members will support, particularly the increase in the limit to individual farmers to buy farm machinery. We all realise that a great increase has taken place in prices of farm machinery in recent years and that the limit in the schedule of the Act we are amending was in many instances too low.

In particular, I am sorry that the Treasurer, when he was considering machinery pools formed by co-operative associations, did not go a little further. He has increased the advance from £1,000 to £2,000, but I do not think £2,000 is sufficient to do the job properly. When we consider the widespread ramifications of many of the dairy companies, the present day cost of machinery and the quantity of machinery that is required to form an efficient pool, we must admit that even the proposed limit is too low. This is a matter that can be dealt with more effectively in the Committee stage, but I forecast that we shall move an amendment in the direction of increasing it. The point will be elaborated on by the hon. member for Fassifern, and I do not want to anticipate the arguments he will possibly use, but I do emphasise that after taking everything into consideration £2,000 to assist co-operative

associations is not sufficient under present-day conditions, and will not make a really effective job of establishing the pools the Bill envisages.

The provisions of this Bill are in the main good and will receive the support of all hon members. I hope that as a result of its passage we shall be able to fill the gap that at present exists in our methods of promoting soldier settlement because the Commonwealth Government have been tardy in dealing with the matter.

I hope that as a result of these provisions soldier settlers, particularly those with experience and a little capital to invest, may be able to get the financial help which at present is denied them—that little bit of much-needed assistance in their early borrowing period that will make them successful settlers. We all hope that we are going to avoid the mistakes made last time and that we shall have a very high percentage of successful soldier settlers. I trust this legislation will make a useful contribution to that end.

**Mr. MACDONALD (Stanley) (11.56 a.m.):** So far as I can see the only difference that is being made by the Bill between the ordinary borrower from the Agricultural Bank and the returned soldier is the three-year period free of interest, which is a very valuable concession. As you know, Mr. Speaker, Queensland is a country of drought. We have only a summer rainfall, consequently our herd yields are much lower than any of those other States and countries, both in butter and milk.

As the Leader of the Opposition said, many returned soldiers who bought farms that were going concerns will find the three-year period free of interest a great boon to them. When a farmer goes on a farm he usually has to make every post a winning post; in other words, he lives from hand to mouth. By giving freedom from interest for a period of three years we enable him to devote his time to the conservation of fodder and developing his herd. At the present time most farmers have no fodder reserve, and the freedom from interest for three years will enable the returned soldier to build up a fodder reserve. In one respect, however, I think this Government have been very lax. They have not lowered the rate of interest to settlers. New Zealand set a very fine example which we refused to follow.

Another point we should consider is the hardships created by some of the inspectors of the Agricultural Bank. The Leader of the Opposition touched on it. I well remember that back in 1914 the Government granted a £1 for £1 subsidy to men on the Inkerman settlement, but a prolonged drought ensued and the Agricultural Bank refused to aid these settlers any further and a private firm had to grub-stake them to the tune of £25,000 in one year. That was due to the fact that the inspector had not gone round and made himself conversant with the circumstances of each settler. I have found in my area that many months elapse

between the time an application is made to the bank and the time when an inspector arrives there.

**Mr. Hanlon:** Did you say that was the 1914 period?

**Mr. MACDONALD:** Yes.

**Mr. Hanlon:** We can accept no responsibility for that.

**Mr. MACDONALD:** I know but the present policy is identical. It is a very great hardship. A man may write to the bank and ask for a certain advance, and as time is the essence of the contract in farming, great hardship may result if he does not receive that help speedily. In farming it is not a case of today or tomorrow but of providing for years, and that aspect of the problem has been entirely neglected by the bank.

**Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (12 noon):** There are some features of this Bill that I like very much and there are others that lend themselves to improvement. First of all I would mention that since the introduction of this Bill, for the introduction of which credit is of course due to the Minister, I have had a number of inquiries about prospects of getting help under it. I like very much the gesture on the part of the Government of helping soldiers by way of reduced interest payments or freedom from interest altogether. This is something we owe to them. I have always advocated this kind of help, and on the Address in Reply I actually advocated it without knowing that this Bill was to be introduced. Certainly it was not my own original idea, but one I learned of when in Victoria some few months ago. I understand that the Victorian Government propose to help returned soldiers in exactly the same way, the only difference being that there they propose to go a great deal further than the Government of Queensland propose under this Bill. I have no desire to be critical from that angle because after all, as I have said, this is a welcome gesture on the part of the Government.

Another feature is the giving to the soldier the right to select his own locality. This is very important. Agriculture has numerous branches, and a person may be quite competent in one section of agriculture and know little or nothing about another. This Bill will give the soldier the right to go in for fruit-farming, wheat-growing, dairying, sugar-growing, or anything he chooses. As an illustration, I have no knowledge of the growing of sugar or wool and numerous other sections of agriculture; most of us have confined our activities to two or three. Some returned soldiers had some experience before the war and obtained a reasonable grounding in one particular section. There is also the preference for a particular district to be considered. For instance, a soldier may wish to go on one of the irrigation farms in the Lockyer and grow lucerne and crops of that kind. If he does, he should be encouraged to go there. I think the success of a man on the land is very often due to the fact that he has selected

his own district and branch of farming, and consequently is more likely to do well in them than if he had been directed to go into a district or branch of farming. I understand the Commonwealth Government will provide the land, and, as I said on the introduction of this Bill, as far as I can gather it is their intention to complete these farms and pass them on to the soldiers as ready-made farms. This morning I have not time to discuss the proposals of the Commonwealth Government—none of us are quite clear on their intentions—but if that is to be done I hope this Government will make every effort to prevent it in this State, and thus give the soldier a bit of liberty and also retain a bit of liberty for this Government in order that they may help the soldiers in their own way. It would be preferable for the Commonwealth Government to set aside a sum of money for each of the States and let the States work out their own destinies. Each State Government has a better knowledge of the problems of its own State than the Commonwealth Government.

I should like to support the suggestion made by the Leader of the Opposition that the Land Army girls be included in the benefits of this Bill. These young women did a wonderful job during the war period, and some of them have gained a valuable experience on the land and should be encouraged to remain there. One line in which they have been especially successful is vegetable-growing, at which some of them are more competent than men.

If they desire to follow that class of work they should be encouraged to do so. Some of them may marry men who have no experience of the land and they would certainly be of great help to their husbands. We should look at this question from the point of view that it is our duty to do something for these girls and I am confident that when the Treasurer appreciates the need for helping them in this way he will accept a suitable amendment in the Committee stage.

We appreciate the fact that this Bill seeks to amend the Agricultural Bank Acts and perhaps you, Mr. Speaker, will rule that we must confine our discussion to that, but I notice that it is proposed also to help in the settlement of discharged soldiers and I should like to ask the Minister who will actually finance the scheme. It is commendable of the Government to set aside part of this surplus for helping soldiers in this way but is this scheme to be financed from Consolidated Revenue or the earnings of the Agricultural Bank? Perhaps the Treasurer will say that the finance will come from both sources, but if we are going to use some of our surplus for rehabilitating our soldiers then it is everybody's responsibility. In my opinion it is everybody's responsibility and for that reason I cannot see anything wrong with going a little further and helping those who have already made arrangements. As the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out, during the last 12 months or so a number of returned men have received accommodation from private banks. I should like the Treasurer to examine the prospects



of reimbursing those soldiers to the extent of 4 per cent. of their interest. In advocating this I am not favouring a rake-off for private banks but I do earnestly wish the returned soldier to have every opportunity of remaining where he is established. He may apply for a transfer but there is a possibility that the Government will not allow him to transfer and I cannot see anything wrong with allowing him to keep his business where he is and reimbursing him for his interest out of Consolidated Revenue for three years to the extent mentioned in the Act. If the Government's desire is merely to collect the whole of the business for the Agricultural Bank that is another matter, but if this is a genuine effort to help soldiers to do well in their businesses, the Government have an excellent opportunity of helping them by doing what I suggest. Even though a soldier may avail himself of the provisions of this Bill he will still need to have an account with a private bank in order to conduct his business conveniently. If the Government are willing to help in the direction I have just suggested they will be rendering a real service to the soldier.

I think there will be an enormous demand for the benefits that will be derived by returned men from this legislation. As I said previously, I have already had a number of inquiries and many young men are looking forward to this opportunity. We must admit that this is something we actually owe to these men. We are not doing them any great favour by giving it to them. Many of them have been in the services upwards of five years and they have given the best years of their lives for this country. They have missed the time when high prices were offering. Many young men who were privileged to stay here and conduct their business in their own way have been able to pay off their farms but those high prices will not last. If we examine the economic position, we can see that Great Britain will not be in a position to pay "flash" prices for foodstuffs for the next four or five years. Therefore, when we return to normal production and depend more or less on export values prices will return to pre-war levels. By the time a soldier has been discharged from the services and has received the full amount of the advance he requires he will not be able to benefit from high prices to anything like the same extent as the man who has been here all the time. My personal opinion is that there could be no better way of compelling each one of us to make a fair contribution to the rehabilitation of the soldiers than by taking this money from the profits the Government have made during the last few years. I repeat that we are not giving the soldier anything to which he is not entitled, and I hope the matter will be carefully considered before we reach the Committee stage. Quite frequently no preparation is made for necessary amendments. We often find that the Minister in charge of a Bill has set ideas as to what might be done, and if an amendment is introduced that does not quite fit in with the idea of the Government it is not accepted.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order! It is time to deal with amendments when the Bill is being considered in Committee. The hon. member should discuss only the principles of the Bill during the second-reading stage.

**Mr. MULLER:** I am disappointed to see that advances to co-operative associations has not been considered as carefully as it might have been. A great variation exists in the sizes of some of our co-operative associations. In some cases an advance of £2,000 might appear to be quite adequate, but in many others it is not nearly enough. We have large co-operative associations in this State, particularly dairy associations, with a membership of 5,000. One association I have in mind is the Port Curtis Dairy Association, which covers a territory larger than the whole of Victoria. In such a case £2,000 is a mere nothing. Under the present system of taxation it is almost impossible for these co-operative associations to provide the necessary money out of profits, because money set aside for this purpose is treated as profits and is taxed. Therefore, it is necessary to have some fund in order that this work may be done.

In addition, something will have to be done in regard to fodder conservation. This is something I have spoken of since the days when I went to school. Very little has been done in this direction. If a drought struck us within the next year or so, a great many of our dairy herds and stock of all kinds would be wiped out. I cannot remember any time when our reserves of fodder were so low.

I believe that something can be done under a system of this kind that will make for the cheap harvesting of fodder crops. It is not so much a question of growing them—that is an easy matter with the existing types of machinery—but it is almost impossible for the farmer to harvest them and fill the silos when he has neither the man-power nor the funds for the purpose. Under a system of this kind, whereby sufficient funds will be made available to dairy associations and other co-operative bodies, enough plant can be purchased and I believe something in a really big way can be done. However, I should like to remind the Treasurer that the Government are taking no risk in making funds available to recognised co-operative associations, which will be responsible for repayment and for interest. No hardship will be imposed upon the Government in making the funds available in this way, but the maximum advance of £2,000 is not enough. Again let me warn the Treasurer that it is no use rushing into Committee on a matter of this kind, simply to talk about amendments to increase the sum to £4,000 or £5,000, because that is not going to help very much in itself. What is required is a wise discrimination between association and association, some of them very small and some of them large. I sincerely hope that that will be done, but unless something is done along those lines a great deal of the benefit expected to come from co-operative associations will not materialise.

I am not here to criticise the Bill in any way because I believe it will be of benefit to the returned soldier, but at the same time we should not be too set in our ideas about it. I believe, for instance, that there is room for more improvement, and if the Treasurer is willing to listen to reason along these lines, I believe that the Bill can be made very helpful to the returned soldiers.

**Mr. Hanlon:** What do you mean by "listen to reason"?

**Mr. MULLER:** I see that the Treasurer is smiling, but I can recall the time when he was very unreasonable. Now that we have him in a jovial mood he probably will listen to the arguments advanced by hon. members on this side and if he does I believe we can make the Bill really worth while.

**Mr. HILEY (Logan) (12.18 p.m.):** During the introductory stage of the Bill, general agreement with it by hon. members on this side of the House was made very clear, but there are two or three points, on which I wish to touch briefly, that I hope will be of some interest to the Treasurer.

The first relates to the extended period the Bill provides for the repayment of loans. It is possible, it appears to me, to go to 38 years in all. Now it seems to me that the whole question of the ability of any subject to repay loans is completely linked with the taxation plans of the community. After all, every citizen, no matter what his means of income, finds that his ability to save is limited to what remains after he has lived and paid his taxes. I think that the very real danger that faces the community generally today with the present level of taxation is that the ability of most people to save money has become almost nominal, with the solitary exception of that enemy of society who either irregularly arranges his taxation affairs or by some surreptitious form of trading manages to get into his hands moneys that escape the obligations that attach to them when they get into the hands of the law-abiding citizen.

It seems to me, much as I value the extended period the Treasurer has seen fit to provide in this amendment, that some of the real virtue or value of this provision will prove to be lost to the citizen if the present rate of taxation continues without change. I make that observation not peculiarly in relation to this measure but as a general observation on something we may have to take into account in every measure we approach, because we must consider what the individual citizen can hope to save over the period of the plan we hope to put into effect. This question of taxation must inevitably engage our consideration on a measure such as this and even though this 38-year period looks liberal, nevertheless we may find that in the light of the incidence of taxation it may prove to be something that has to be corrected.

The second point I ask the Treasurer to consider relates to the principle this Bill continues, namely, the rate of deposit. We

have been told that the rate of deposit is 20 per cent. of the fair and reasonable value; the Bill enables an advance to be made up to 80 per cent. of the value. Some difficulty has arisen, and more can arise, if there is any disparity—and certainly any wide disparity—between the pegged value on the one hand and the fair and reasonable value for security purposes on the other. On a case submitted to me recently the figures ran out something like this: the purchase value that would be permitted as the pegged value under the National Security Regulations was £3,500. The fair and reasonable value assessed by the Agricultural Bank inspectors was £2,500. The complaint of this returned soldier was, in his own words, "It is no good saying I am entitled to an 80 per cent. advance on a 20-per cent. deposit when on a purely arithmetical basis I can borrow only four-fifths of £2,000 notwithstanding that the price permitted under the National Security Regulations, the price the seller wants, is £3,500."

**Mr. Hanlon:** He wanted to pay an inflated price for the property.

**Mr. HILEY:** Well, something is wrong. If there is any virtue in the pegging of prices then the £3,500 should be a reasonable measure of value for security purposes also. The difficulty arises because the pegging of prices does not march reasonably closely with the reasonable value for security purposes arrived at by the Agricultural Bank inspectors. I do not shut my eyes to the fact that we are experiencing a distinct surge in prices of many agricultural and pastoral lands. One of the effects of the pegging of prices of many of our primary products is that values are substantially above what they were in 1939, which in turn has created a demand for land at figures substantially in excess of 1939 rates. I do not doubt that many valuers employed by the Agricultural Bank say, "We are on a rising market: this may be a transitory value during the period of boom and it will be prudent not to value to the limit which officers working under the National Security Regulations are prepared to accept." They accordingly value within that limit. I can understand why they do it and I am not prepared to entirely condemn it. What I do say is that the value given by this Bill and the 20-per-cent. deposit are going to be lost to returned soldiers if this wide gap between the security value on the one hand and the pegged selling values on the other hand is to continue.

I commend to the Treasurer the desirability of examining the position in relation to that gap in values, to see if there is not some way in which he can serve the community by narrowing it. It may be the correction required is not in the value fixed by his inspectors but in the ceiling price permitted by the National Security Regulations; but somewhere and somehow the gap has to be reduced if we can say to the returned man, "The deposit you are asked to find is 20 per cent." On the figure quoted to me by one returned soldier applicant, he was asked to

pay £3,500 for the property, and had to find out of his own money £1,500. While it is quite true the difference arises from the failure of a State plan on the one hand and a Commonwealth control on the other hand to march on reasonably parallel courses, the soldier made it perfectly clear to me that on a genuine 20 per cent. he could finance, but he could not finance on the margin he was asked to meet, and he was a very disappointed man to feel what may be a theoretical benefit was in practice denied to him.

Those two points I commend for the consideration of the Treasurer. I like the basic principle of what he is trying to do in the Bill, and I say in each case the correction need not come of necessity as a correction of State legislation, but as a correction of those external things that influence both decisions; that is to say, the correction of the taxation aspect can come at present only from Canberra, and the correction of the gap in values should come from a more effective control of pegged prices rather than the erratic control that appears to be the best we have at present.

I appreciate the Treasurer's consideration in extending the interest-free period. I repeat what I said on the introductory stage: that of all the ways of helping returned soldiers the plan that has been adopted is the best suited for this purpose. I hope the hon. gentleman will find some means of correcting the difficulties I have raised and ensuring that the full benefits possible in theory from the Bill will in practice be made available to returned soldiers.

**Mr. MORRIS** (Enoggera) (12.28 p.m.): From the general point of view, in conjunction with other members of the Opposition, I strongly support this Bill, and I am very pleased to see it introduced.

The member for Logan has pointed out certain aspects of the Bill that he thinks could be improved. I draw the attention of the Treasurer to one matter. After the last war relatives and friends of mine who took advantage of the financial assistance given by the Agricultural Bank to returned soldier settlers found after 10 years, as a result of the interest rates they had to pay, that they had great difficulty in meeting their payments. In this Bill 4 per cent. is being charged, but there will be a period of three years when no interest will be payable. This is highly commendable but I think the main difficulty facing these men will be in meeting the interest when payment is required. A period free from interest is very acceptable but an interest rate lower than 4 per cent. is desirable.

It may be argued that seeing that the interest on the public debt is 4 per cent. it would not be economic to reduce it below that figure. I maintain that it would. For instance, the interest rate we pay on the Australian debt, speaking from memory, is £3 7s. 6d. Reference to the "Economist" discloses that the bank rate in England is 2 per cent. I feel that if the interest rate to be charged to returned soldiers for the

purchase of land was reduced to, say, 2 per cent. it would be of very much greater assistance to the returned soldiers; and it could be done. In England, as you know, Mr. Speaker, there is a scheme for the purchase of small farms not for returned soldiers but for ordinary civilians and the rate of interest charged on the debt is 2½ per cent. and on a couple of thousand pounds over a period of years that rate would be of very great assistance to the returned men. If it can be done in England, where the bank rate is 2 per cent., not 2½ per cent. as here, I cannot see any reason why the rate on loans to returned soldiers should not be reduced from 4 per cent. to at least 2½ per cent., or the interest-free period extended beyond three years. Either of these conditions would help the men very considerably and I commend them to the Minister.

**Mr. AIKENS** (Mundingburra) (12.32 p.m.): I commend the general principles of the Bill. In a few small particulars it has failed to give what I think it should have given, but I will either move amendments along those lines in the Committee stage or support amendments that will be moved by other members of the Chamber.

The people of Queensland as a whole will welcome the introduction of this Bill, not only because it provides for the establishment of the returned soldier on the land but because it goes another short step towards the development of this great State. It was because I really wanted information in the interests of the people of my own electorate interested in land settlement generally and in soldier settlement in particular that I asked the Treasurer on Thursday last the questions he answered this morning. I was conversant with the reply given to the Leader of the Opposition by the Secretary for Public Lands on 18 September, but I asked the questions of the Treasurer on Thursday last because I desired full information as to the area of land that would be available for soldier settlement and did not think the answer to the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition supplied the information I required. If you remember, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition asked what land had been chosen in a certain regard and these, the round figures, are near enough to the actual figures, with which I will not weary the House—

Area.	Acres.
Dalby .. ..	1,750,000
Taroom .. ..	1,250,000
Rockhampton ..	250,000
Theodore .. ..	250,000

That deals with only a very small part of the State and I have no personal knowledge of the fertility or otherwise of the particular areas that have been set out, but I do know, for instance in my own electorate that there many persons and bodies are interested in the question of soldier settlement on the great Burdekin watershed and especially in the Burdekin Delta. Some time ago, when we discovered to our astonishment that an investigation was being made in the Dalby,

Taroom, Rockhampton and Theodore areas, I and many other organisations in the Lower Burdekin got in touch with our Federal member and asked him why the Lower Burdekin had been excluded from this investigation and from the scope of the inquiry.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order! That question is one for Commonwealth administration.

**Mr. AIKENS:** The Commonwealth Government told us that it was the State's responsibility to make the inquiries and report to the Commonwealth as to what land would be suitable and available for soldier settlement.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order! The hon. member is a good way away from the principles of the Bill.

**Mr. AIKENS:** Perhaps you may consider that I am wandering, Mr. Speaker, but I can assure you that I have a very definite point in mind. The point I have in mind is contained in this Bill, which provides that soldier settlers shall have made available to them certain sums of money at certain rates of interest, and that the money shall be interest free for certain periods, and sets out certain conditions under which the money shall be repaid to the Agricultural Bank and, consequently, to the Government. I contend that this Bill in itself is not sufficient because it is not tied up with the broad principles of land development. What is the use of telling a soldier to go along to a Rural Bank, make application under the provisions of this Bill and have made available to him moneys that are provided by the Government to set him up on the land if when he gets there he finds the only land that is available for him is land that has already been frozen in the Dalby, Taroom, Rockhampton, and Theodore areas?

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order! The hon. member will have an opportunity of discussing that phase of the subject later.

**Mr. AIKENS:** I have tried in all ways to get information that I know my electors, and interested people in the Ayr district in particular, require, but in view of your ruling I shall have to confine my remarks strictly to the principles of this Bill. I am extremely pleased to know from the Treasurer, in reply to my question this morning, that certain legislation will be brought down later to deal with the question of land resumption and land that will be available for soldier settlement—I presume under the provisions of this Bill. When that legislation comes down I sincerely hope, in fact I know, that full opportunity to discuss land and the particular areas that will be made available will be given to hon. members.

I know that when discussing anything in connection with the financial aspect of a Bill the hon. member for Logan is generally on very sound and solid ground, but he stated that the ability of the soldier settler to repay the money that is advanced to him under the terms of this Bill will depend entirely on the taxation rate that is imposed upon

him or upon the community from time to time. With that I disagree. The ability of the soldier to repay the money that is advanced to him under the provisions of this Bill will depend upon the marketing of his product. It will depend entirely upon whether he can get his product to market and whether once he gets it to market he can get a fair and reasonable price for it. The whole success of the operations of this Bill will depend upon the marketing of the soldier's produce once the Government get him on the land.

I do not think that as legislators we should deal with hypothetical problems that may arise from time to time. It is possible, as the hon. member for Logan stated, that taxation may be a crippling burden on the soldier settler in future, but it is also a fact that inflation will be in the interests of the soldier settler. If a soldier borrows £2,000 from the Agricultural Bank under the provisions of this Bill and if in five or 10 years we have an inflated currency, the soldier may get £2,000 from one consignment of cabbages sent by him to the Roma Street markets and so be able to repay his total indebtedness to the bank as the result of the sale of one consignment of vegetables.

When we read of the dangers of inflation—when we read, for instance, that not long after the last war labourers in Germany received 17,000,000 marks a day in wages—we can realise just how the effects of inflation can upset the financial and economic fabric of any country. Those are purely hypothetical matters that have been introduced by the hon. member for Logan, but he introduced them in a way that at least gave considerable information and knowledge to the members of this Chamber.

If this Bill is to succeed, and if the Government are to carry out their policy of settling returned soldiers on the land and are to make this money available through the Agricultural Bank in accordance with its provisions, the Agricultural Bank itself will have to play its part. Today it is ultra-conservative. I have knowledge of many instances in which farmers who have been struggling along on the finance given to them by the Agricultural Bank, wanting only a few hundred more pounds to put them on their feet. However, the Agricultural Bank would not advance them any more money because of its ultra-conservative outlook and arrangements had to be made for private banks to take over their indebtedness to the Agricultural Bank and to advance them further amounts to enable them to get on a sound financial footing. The extra advance made by a private bank in that way has meant the difference between success and failure to many farmers in this State. If this Bill is to succeed—and I sincerely hope that this and every other piece of legislation introduced into this House providing for the rehabilitation of the returned soldier will succeed—it will be vitally necessary to see that the Agricultural Bank plays its part in its administration.

**Mr. L. J. BARNES** (Cairns) (12.42 p.m.): This Bill, as far as its general principles are concerned, has my blessing. As I mentioned on the introductory stage, the main difference between this measure and that brought forward after the last war is that most of the returned soldiers from the last war were dead before they got security, whilst there is a possibility that the returned soldiers from this war will get security under this measure while they are still alive. I believe that this concession is deserved and their title to it is written in letters of blood.

The hon. member for Mundingburra talks about the possibilities of the gain that might be brought to the returned soldier by inflation. We are well aware that every pound advanced to a returned soldier in 1918 has a buying power of approximately only 13s. 8d. in 1945. Therefore, the deflation of the pound is the cause of a man's not being able to pay his debts. The returned soldier would probably be better off if the pound note was deflated to the same extent during the next 20 years, but we have no guarantee that it will be so deflated. It may be inflated. The pound note of today might buy two pounds' worth of goods in 20 years' time. We do not know.

Whilst I fully realise and appreciate the generosity of the Government in this regard, I agree with the remarks of the hon. the Leader of the Opposition. The Government have about £6,000,000 at fixed deposit bearing interest at about 2.2 per cent. Under the Bill they propose to lend some of that money at 4 per cent. with a let-off of interest payments for three years and a let-off of redemption payments for three years and then for a further period of five years. I look forward to the day when the Government will bring forward an amendment of the Bill providing for a continuance of freedom from interest and making a charge for the cost of administration only. I think that is the only way out of our rural trouble.

At 12.46 p.m.,

Mr. DUGGAN (Toowoomba) relieved Mr. Speaker in the Chair.

**Mr. L. J. BARNES:** It is time that the depredations of the blood-sucker who has been sucking the nation's life blood by charging exorbitant usurious interest rates should cease. The settlers should have such concessions given to them as will enable them to retain their freedom and the Government are doing that temporarily at least by giving them an interest-free period of three years. As I said, I look forward to the time when the Government will introduce legislation continuing that interest-free period and providing only for the cost of administration, in other words, advance interest-less money.

Provision is made in the Bill for the purchase of machinery on certain conditions. While I appreciate the intentions of the Government in extending preference to rural men in this connection to the men out-back—who, God knows, are being exploited enough—there are other returned soldiers who probably will not want to go on the land but will

want to buy a bulldozer or a tractor or a rotary hoe to do agricultural work for others. I readily admit that the would-be borrower could not expect to have a period of 35 years in which to repay such a loan. However, the Bill should have catered for such people. They are returned soldiers from this war and they may want to buy a couple of rotary hoes and a tractor to do farming work on contract, but under existing conditions they can get that money only as an ordinary borrower from the bank. Surely such a man should be entitled to enjoy the benefit of the interest-free period of three years and the freedom from redemption payments for three years, or eight years in all? The man in the barber shop or the doctor could possibly get an advance, but the point is that he could not enjoy the concessions provided in the Bill and he should have them equally with the man who wishes to settle in a rural occupation. The Government should not sectionalise in this matter but should give all returned soldiers the same opportunities, especially as they have a large sum of money lying idle, in other words at fixed deposit, for which they could get interest at the rate of 4 per cent. for about 32 or 35 years.

The Government would not lose anything at all by this proposal. As a matter of fact, I think it will be found that it will be hard to invest money for a while and if they have £5,000,000 or £6,000,000 at fixed deposit they will probably be better off if they introduce a Bill to provide that all returned soldiers shall enjoy the same concessions as they propose to give to those who engage in rural occupations. My proposal would fill a long-felt want and at the present time the Government have the money to do all these things.

I appreciate that part of the Bill that enables the settler to choose his own land, but there should be an educational policy associated with the idea. Probably the proposed settler has not previously had any knowledge of a rural calling and he should have the opportunity of learning something about mixed farming, not commercial farming.

Today all we seem to consider is the economic side of production. There is also the social side. I appreciate the fact that this Bill seeks to help the land settler, but that is not all we should consider. We should see to it that some sort of educational system is set up to teach intending settlers whether it was desirable to engage in mixed family farming, instead of being one-crop farmers. The day is fast approaching when disaster will overtake one-crop farmers. The day will come when it will be necessary for them not to put all their eggs in one basket. The day may come when the cane will be blowing in the meadows and there will be no market for it. But if the farmers produce food enough for their own families they will survive that day. I believe that the first objective of a farmer should be to produce from his own farm sufficient food for his family. The next consideration for him is to spread the lines for which he depends on the open market to at least three or four different products.

I believe the Government have good intentions. Even the workers at times penalise themselves. If you ask the average returned soldier where he would prefer to have his house built, he will reply "In the suburbs of Brisbane" in preference to a rural area. He forgets that it takes him three-quarters of an hour to get to work and three-quarters of an hour to return from his work to his home, and that it costs him at least 5s. or 6s. a week in tram fares. In other words, his suburban home costs him an extra 1½ hours a day in addition to a penalty of 5s. or 6s. a week in tram or train fares. If the Government forced those conditions on him he would want to pull down the whole State.

However, the more attention the Government can give to the subject of settling returned men on the land the better. If this Bill achieves that object, then the Government will be doing a good job.

**Mr. DECKER (Sandgate) (12.53 p.m.):** I am glad the Government have given this Bill precedence to others on the business sheet. The Treasurer, when introducing this Bill, said that we should have to do something, as the Commonwealth were moving too slowly. In other words, we have introduced a Bill of our own to get on with the job. Its introduction, however, coincides with that of a Bill now before the Federal Parliament. I believe the States, as agents of the Federal Government, will be charged with implementing it in the same manner as they have been charged with rehabilitating our returned soldiers.

This Bill deals with the financial responsibilities of intending soldier settlers. I understand that under the Commonwealth scheme the Commonwealth Government and the State Governments share any loss of interest, or capital, or writing-down of capital indebtedness, or loss of stock and that sort of thing. I am beginning to wonder which is the best scheme. If every returned soldier takes advantage of the provisions of the Bill then the Commonwealth legislation will be rendered useless. It may be that we are to have two schemes, State and Federal, each operating against the other. It seems to me that the returned soldier who desires to settle on the land will have the choice of the two schemes. It is ridiculous to have two pieces of legislation, one enacted by the Commonwealth and the other by the State, dealing with the same subject. The Treasurer should tell us which is the more advantageous of the two.

**Mr. Hanlon:** You are opposed to the Bill.

**Mr. DECKER:** I am not opposed to it. I am glad to see that some move is being made, but I think it is regrettable to see this bungling. One scheme must be better than the other. We do not want two schemes. We have to find out yet which will be the better scheme.

The interest rate is the most important factor in the matter of advances to soldier settlers. A heavy interest rate is a tremendous burden. I am pleased that the Bill provides for no interest for three years and

for the payment of interest only for the next five years and 30 years for capital and interest repayment. I do not see why the State could not have made a more generous gesture and waived interest for returned soldiers altogether, or at least charged interest at a lesser rate than that charged the average borrower from the Agricultural Bank, which has been reduced to 4 per cent. The returned-soldier settler is on the same basis as any other borrower after the period of three years. After all is said and done, are we making a generous gesture to returned soldier settlers? I think we should provide for a greater concession than that contained in the Bill.

If the Government had consulted members of the Opposition before introducing this measure, they might have got some valuable suggestions regarding the settling of returned soldiers. I have a suggestion to make. What is to happen in the case of the death, total disablement or partial disablement of a returned-soldier settler? What happens to his equity in the land? Will the wife and children be expected to carry on the debt? We have a State Government Insurance Office, so why not extend an insurance scheme to cover the liability of any soldier who takes up land, so that in the event of his death his heirs may inherit it free of debt? I think such a scheme has some merit and should be taken into account. We have the machinery at hand to carry out my suggestion. It is not like life insurance. The liability would be a decreasing amount: as the loan decreased the liability would decrease. The liability of a permanently incapacitated settler to clear his property from debt is an important one, and so is the matter of payments during a period of partial disablement. Those are matters that could be covered under an insurance scheme.

I do not intend to take up very much more of the time of the House but as the Acting Premier attended the Premiers' Conference at Canberra he must have come to some decision with the Commonwealth Government in regard to the financing of the Commonwealth scheme and I think it incumbent on the hon. gentleman to outline those arrangements and state whether they clash with those in the Bill before the House.

At 2.17 p.m.,

**Mr. SPEAKER** resumed the chair.

**Mr. DECKER:** I am perturbed at one aspect only of the matter. I know definitely from what has been disclosed of the Commonwealth Government's scheme that they intend to pay a living allowance to any soldier who settles under their scheme. That is a considerable advantage to such a settler and I should like to know whether if a soldier took advantage of our law to borrow money interest-free for a period of three years, he would be eligible for the living allowance under the Commonwealth scheme. Before this Bill goes further on its passage we should know exactly what we are doing. If the living allowance is payable to men settling under the State scheme it means an added

advantage and in my opinion would throw all the onus on the State Government of financing land settlement in Queensland. It may be that the Commonwealth Government will finance on a fifty-fifty basis or the State will advance 100 per cent. under the State scheme. Returned soldiers will avail themselves of the better scheme of the two, therefore the matter should be clarified because it is not fair to have two conflicting schemes operating at the same time, the State's conflicting with the Commonwealth's. That is not in the interests of the State or in the best interests of the settlement of our returned soldiers on the land.

As I have stated, I should like to have inaugurated by the Government some scheme of insurance under which liability in respect of a workers' dwelling or farm property was covered in the event of disablement or the untimely demise of the purchaser, whether a returned soldier or otherwise.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order! The hon. member is suggesting some new principle not covered by the Bill.

**Mr. DECKER:** As it is a new principle, I will not persist in it at this stage but it is of some importance for future social legislation.

**Mr. PLUNKETT (Albert) (2.20 p.m.):** This is a very important Bill and I am pleased that the State Government have introduced it notwithstanding the intentions of the Commonwealth Government in the matter. No-one will dispute the responsibility we have to our own people in our own State. If we can do anything to foster the settlement of returned soldiers on the land, or to rehabilitate them in civil life and give them an opportunity of making a decent living, then it is the Government's duty to do it.

In bringing down this Bill, the Government are tackling a very serious and important problem, and it is essential that our efforts be successful. Many problems and difficulties are associated with this question. We do our best by legislation to help these people to settle on the land successfully, but we must remember at all times that climate conditions have a great bearing on primary production in a State like Queensland. If after these people are settled on the land, there is no stability of marketing conditions or no guarantee of a reasonable value for products, this scheme cannot be successful. As an instance of the great bearing seasonal conditions have, we have only to look at this season's crop of lucerne. I do not remember, and I do not think anyone else can recall, any season for the last 20 years that has been such a prolific lucerne-producer. The fact that our seasons vary so much makes it impossible for anyone to prepare for them with certainty. I mention this to show that it is not possible to put people on the land and tell them that they must grow certain things at certain times of the year. Such a system can never be successful.

One of the reasons why our Agricultural Bank Board has not been as successful as

it might have been is that it has not been in a position to make quick and definite decisions. This morning the Minister for Transport asked why people could not get money from the bank. The reason why many of them prefer dealing with the proprietary banks is that they receive a decision within a few days whether money they apply for will be available for them. Dealing with proprietary banks has much to commend it when it comes to farms in the bank's area. I have had valuable personal experience of borrowing from proprietary banks, and as a result have arrived at the conclusion that the success of proprietary banks, despite the fact that they charge a higher rate of interest, is due to the fact that they make quick decisions. I venture the opinion that proprietary banks have been responsible for more settlement, more land development, and more successful farmers than ever the Agricultural Bank has been.

**Mr. Hanlon:** Nonsense!

**Mr. PLUNKETT:** I say that emphatically. The reason is that when an application is made to the Agricultural Bank for an advance the bank insists upon an inspection. Through lack of inspectors this inspection is often long delayed. Again, I know of cases in which the inspector has recommended a loan and the office has refused the application.

I mention those things to show that if we are to put these returned soldiers on the land with success we must be quick in our decisions and must not hamper them with the filling-in of forms and delays in inspections and valuations of their properties.

Taxation has a big bearing on what may happen. I think the time will come when the Commonwealth Government will have to grant some relief in taxation, not only to returned soldiers who go on the land, but to other people who are now interested in primary production. Some different form of taxation will have to be brought in. After all, a man going on the land has no idea of what his income is likely to be. Many people have made money for the first few years after going on the land but have then been stricken by a drought and have lost everything.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr. PLUNKETT:** I quite agree with your ruling, Mr. Speaker. In this Bill we are inviting all and sundry returned soldiers to settle on the land. We are encouraging them to make homes on the land for themselves. That is in the interests of the State. We intend to give them what some people might call liberal terms. However, when all is said and done, they are embarking on a livelihood in which they do not know what values they will receive for their products. They are to have a period of three years free of interest but I do not think that is enough. Whatever chance a married man may have on the land a single man has none. A man cannot work on a farm and do his own cooking and everything else about the farm and make a success of it. Too many single men have failed at it.

While the Bill appears liberal because it gives these returned soldiers a period of three years without the payment of interest and a further period of five years with the payment of interest only, I suggest seriously to the Government that during that period of five years the rate of interest payable should be 2 per cent. only. It is during the first period of eight years a man will prove either a success or a failure as a farmer or a settler—it will take him eight years to become established. A man may be able to carry on without the payment of any interest for three years, but instead of charging him 4 per cent. interest for the next five years I think it would be to the benefit of this State to give him a further chance by charging him only 2 per cent. At the end of that period he will be able to pay 4 per cent. if he has been successful. During the period in which he is establishing himself and getting the necessary equipment to make himself more efficient, I think it would be well worth our while to see that he is not hampered in any way by having to pay 4 per cent. interest. We should give him the money for 2 per cent. and give him a chance of making a success of it, because his success means the success of land settlement in Queensland.

The Bill enables dairy associations and other co-operative organisations to borrow up to £2,000 for the purchase of farming machinery and implements to do farming work on the contract system. I am wondering whether it is not possible to extend the concession of an interest-free period of three years that is to be enjoyed by the ordinary land settler to people who buy this farming machinery to carry out work on contract. The point is that if a co-operative organisation agrees to buy the machinery to the maximum of £2,000 it will have to look round for a person with the requisite knowledge to handle the machinery and do the work. Experience tells me that a person using another person's tools, in this case highly mechanised and highly priced machinery, is not likely to take the same care of it as he would if the machinery was his own property. I am very keen to see that the contract system of doing this work should be encouraged, as I know that anyone who assumes the liability of buying this expensive equipment to give this valuable service to the community will be personally interested in keeping his machinery in good repair, that is, he will not continue to use it when there are a few bolts missing or loose, knowing full well that to persist in doing so will ultimately lead to its destruction, and so shorten its effective life. The proposal to enable co-operative organisations to buy this machinery up to a maximum cost of £2,000 is a good idea and reads very well on paper, but unless you can get the person who is to work the machinery to assume the responsibility for payment and thus make him keen to see that the utmost care is taken of it, the work is not going to be as economically done as we should all like it to be.

I have not a great deal more to say about the Bill. It is a very important one, but

it is not so easy to say that it will be successful. I frankly admit that we are doing the right thing in giving these people the opportunity to settle on the land, but I am anxious to see that they are not embarrassed in any way, especially after they have gone on the land. Let me explain it in this way: the soldier is to have an interest-free period for three years, and begins his period of settling-in. There is nothing worse for any man than that he should, after working hard and long hours and making a bit of money, run into a drought and see all his good work over two or three years go for nothing, simply because he has no more money to enable him to carry on.

**Mr. Moore:** The banks did not apologise for taking the farms off these fellows in the past.

**Mr. PLUNKETT:** I am not so much concerned with what the Commonwealth Government are actually doing. The purpose of this Bill is a responsibility that devolves upon the whole of the people of Australia, an obligation to see that the returned men get this opportunity of settling on the land, and if by our suggestions we can improve the Bill and prevent any pitfalls from developing, the better it will be for all concerned.

Neither the rural nor the private banks are in the best position to do this job. We owe it to these people to settle them on the land and see that they make a success of the business. It is our duty to do what we can to help them develop our land along sound lines. It is better that we should be liberal than niggardly with these men to whom we owe so much and thus give them an opportunity by hard work of laying a good foundation for themselves. We shall thus help them materially. If at the end of the three years for which they are relieved of the payment of interest on their loans they meet a succession of bad seasons or low prices, they will probably say, "This game is no good to me, I will get out." It is better that we should give them an interest-free loan for five years than force them to do that as the State as well as themselves will benefit by the hard work they will put into their farms.

Much of the talk on inflation of land values is mythical. Dozens of men every day give high prices for land, but by the application of scientific methods they make more out of the land than the original owners. I know people who have been on the land for 30 or 40 years and are still learning. What may be a successful method of working the land this year may not be so the following year. The application of science will help in working the land successfully, but weather conditions play a very important part in the matter, too. It is by the study of recurring problems that the farmers will be enabled to overcome them and be successful. The point I want to make is that farming is a seasonal occupation; therefore, we should be as liberal as possible with those who are willing to embark on a



career on the land, and once having got them there we should keep them there if possible.

**Mr. PATERSON (Bowen) (2.37 p.m.):** Now that we have been able to get copies of the printed Bill, we are in a much better position to determine its merits, and I must confess at the outset that there has been a considerable amount of misconception in the minds of the public as to what it really provides. Judging by what appeared in the newspapers when the Bill was first introduced, one would think that its main provisions dealt with soldier settlement or financing ex-servicemen and ex-servicewomen. Only one part of the Bill deals with that aspect of the subject.

I am not attributing any blame to the Treasurer for that misconception for I recognise that he is not responsible for what is played up or played down in the newspapers and when he introduced the Bill he gave us a fair account of its principles. But that misconception does exist and to such an extent that many people have the view that the concessions the Bill gives apply solely to ex-servicemen and ex-servicewomen who settle on the land. That is not so. There is only one concession to ex-soldier settlers and that is the one that allows him freedom from interest payments for the first three years. The concession that settlers are not expected to make any principal payments in the following five years if the Agricultural Bank so wills it, is not one that applies to soldier settlers only. It applies to civilian settlers also. In other words, the only advantage servicemen get is that they will be able to borrow money in the same way and up to the same amount as any civilian settler but they will not be called on to meet any interest payments for the first three years. In other words, if an ex-serviceman borrows £1,000 he will gain £40 the first year, £40 the second year, and £40 again in the third year.

If he is not in a position to pay off any of the principal in the first three years the concession will be that he will not have to pay interest of £40 the first year, £40 the second year, and £40 in the third year. After that he is in the same position as any civilian or other settler on the land who is able to obtain a loan from the Agricultural Bank. I mention that because if we get the idea that this is primarily or mainly a Bill dealing with soldier settlement we are apt to approach it solely from the point of view of the soldier, and if we get the idea that the majority of these principles apply to civilians as well we may approach it in a different manner.

The Bill contains three main points. The first is that a concession is to be granted to ex-service men and ex-service women so that they will not have to meet any interest payments for the first three years. The second is the principle that legalises the reduction of interest rates on loans granted by the Agricultural Bank to 4 per cent. As the Treasurer pointed out, for some time by regulation certain concessions have been made along these lines and in order to remove any doubt as to their validity this Bill contains a pro-

vision legalising them. Those deductions which reduce the interest rate to 4 per cent. in all cases, will apply to all the settlers who have loans. The third main principle deals with the increasing of the amount of loans the Agricultural Bank can make: to £1,000 in the case of certain individuals and £2,000 in the case of certain companies that use the money for certain purposes as set out in the Bill. Those are the three main new principles in the Bill.

The principle set out in the Bill granting the concession to soldier settlers, if the Agricultural Bank agrees, that they will not have to meet principal payments in the five years after the first three years is not a new principle, because even prior to the introduction of the Bill it was lawful for the bank, if it so desired, to free a civilian settler from principal payments for the first five years. I want to point out that that concession is not an absolute one; it is a conditional concession; it depends solely on the discretion of the Agricultural Bank. There is no guarantee that a settler, whether he be an ex-serviceman or a civilian, will get that concession if he goes on the land. The only guarantee the ex-serviceman has is that he will have freedom from the necessity of paying interest for the first three years; in other words, the concession of not having to pay principal payment rests entirely on the discretion of the Agricultural Bank. That obviously will depend on whether the administration of the Agricultural Bank is sympathetic or not.

The objections I have to those principles are these: first of all, I do not think the reduction in the interest rate goes far enough. I realise that it can be said to any suggestion that interest rates should be reduced, "Well the Government have to pay interest on their loans," but before I am satisfied completely on this point I should like to have a clear explanation from the Treasurer as to the source of the funds used by the bank. How much money does the bank use in assisting servicemen settlers and how much in assisting civilians? How much money used for these purposes is obtained from loan and how much from taxation? In other words, if the Government can obtain part of the money from taxation, why should there be any rate of interest except merely to meet a purely administrative charge? If, on the other hand, they obtained approximately 50 per cent. of the funds from consolidated revenue, obtained by taxation, and 50 per cent. from loans, I can see no valid objection, even from the purely economic standpoint, to a substantial reduction in the rate of interest.

I go further and contend that in this Bill it is not right for us to consider these proposals purely from the economic standpoint. We must consider them from the human standpoint also; in other words, it should not fetter our hands when we seek to improve legislation to be told that if we grant concessions it will mean that the Agricultural Bank may be run at a loss. That loss can be made up by taxation and taxation can be levied on the basis of ability to pay.

In other words, the principle on which I wish to see the economics of rural settlement based is that the rate of interest shall be such as will enable any reasonably capable settler to make a decent living and give his wife and his family a decent standard of living. If a rate of 4 per cent. necessitates a settler, whether he be civilian or ex-serviceman, trying to live under the inhuman conditions that many settlers have lived under in the past, it is the duty of this Parliament to reduce the rate of interest and meet the loss out of Consolidated Revenue raised by taxation based on the ability to pay.

There is another weakness in the Bill but only a minor weakness, and with all due respect I suggest to the Treasurer that he might give consideration to removing it by including in the Bill persons other than those now provided for. If they are not included later, I propose to move an amendment along those lines. I say that of course, not in any sense of trying to intimidate the Treasurer—first of all, I know the hon. gentleman would not be intimidated, and secondly it is not right that intimidatory methods should be used in Parliament—but merely as a statement of my intentions. I am of the opinion that the term “eligible person” is not wide enough. Whereas it is wide enough insofar as it covers all classes of ex-service personnel, there should be some provision for the widow of an ex-serviceman. For illustration take a man who prior to enlistment worked a farm. He may have been a married man with a wife and two or even three or four young children. After being away at the war for some years he is killed. His wife and his children, who have grown a little bit older in the interim, may wish to carry on that farm. They may need financial assistance, and the least this Parliament can do is to ensure that the widow shall have the same financial assistance as her husband would have received had he been fortunate enough to return safe and sound and able to carry on his farm.

I should like to quote a few extracts from the second report of the Rural Reconstruction Committee to the Commonwealth Prime Minister, dated 18 January, 1944, because it deals with some of the financial problems that confronted settlers after the last war and sets out some of the principles on which the members of the Committee believed financial assistance to ex-service settlers should be based. Dealing with capital debt and interest burden, on page 13 the report states—

“It has been stated that want of initial capital and the consequent necessity of carrying a heavy burden of interest-bearing debt made it impossible for many soldiers to succeed. There is no reason to believe that the ex-servicemen of this war will, on the whole, be any better equipped financially than those of the last war. It has, therefore, to be considered whether the nation shall insist on the possession by applicants of a sufficient margin of capital as one of the qualifications for assistance to obtain settlement on a holding; whether the nation shall create the margin at the outset by capital debt concession; or whether the

nation shall give substantial interest concessions to overcome the disability of lack of capital, which is particularly burdensome in the case of primary industries with their exceptional hazards and the long-time lag between outlay and return. Either of the last two courses will involve governments in substantial irrecoverable commitments, but, if the Governments are to accept the responsibility in order to give the settler an opportunity of success, it is better to realise at the outset the cost rather than impose full liability at the beginning only to write off substantial amounts later after considerable hardship has been imposed upon the individual in his attempts to service an impossible burden.”

“The Commission is of the opinion that provided the qualifications of experience and capacity are satisfactory lack of capital should not be a bar and the disability should be overcome mainly by the concessions on interest to operate until financial stability is reached.”

That is one of the principles this Bill is attempting to put into practice. As I have said already, my main objection on this is that, even though there is a concession in that the soldier settler has not to pay any interest at all in the first three years, the burden does immediately begin to grow at the rate of 4 per cent. interest from the end of the third year, and that rate of interest is too high.

I also believe that the Government might well have considered whether this three-year period was enough. I realise that some settlers may, with the aid of the Agricultural Bank, be able to purchase ready-made farms, farms that are going concerns. There may be others, however, who will borrow money and who will have to start on farms almost from scratch, although I hope that the scratch in the new race will not be the scratch right from the time the stumps have to be dug out, trees blown up or ground cleared. I hope that at least the scratch line of the economic race will be drawn across the farms and fields after at least the ground is thoroughly prepared in the sense of being completely cleared for farming operations. This Bill, however, does not make any effort to deal with that problem and does not even purport to deal with it, so I do not propose to criticise it on that ground. My point is that even if a soldier settler, or a civilian settler for that matter, goes on the land and the land is cleared for him, he still has a big uphill battle before him and it may be that he will not be ready to meet his commitments for a much longer period than three years. In my opinion that period of three years is much too short. The least we could have given was a period of five years as the Rural Reconstruction Commission actually recommended. At least we could have done that in the case of the soldier settler.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that you will bear with me while I read what the report of the Rural Reconstruction Commission had to say on the financing of soldier settlers. Much of what

it contains is commonplace, but I have to quote what is commonplace and what is new, in order to give a connected statement. On page 37 of its Report the Commission says—

“On obtaining a holding a settler will be faced with the responsibility of providing for—

- (a) the initial purchase consideration;
- (b) the initial stock, plant and equipment to commence farming operations;
- (c) working funds to enable him to provide working expenses and sustenance;
- (d) further improvements, and capital additions as further improvements take effect.

He will require—

- (a) guidance in purchases and in the planning of development work;
- (b) financial assistance.”

The next paragraph, on the next page, deals with the necessity for close supervision, and it reads—

“Experience in the last soldier settlement scheme revealed this phase of establishment as one in which many unsatisfactory features developed. Unsatisfactory stock and unsatisfactory equipment were often bought.”

If I may pause here, I should like to stress that it is not sufficient merely to grant a settler a loan; it is necessary to see that that loan is spent to the best advantage both to the settler and to the State. The report continues—

“Funds were loosely handled and expenditures on working account and for improvements were frequently not satisfactorily planned. It is considered imperative on this occasion that the settlers should be under very close technical and financial supervision until their successful establishment is assured. The State Rural Credit Organisation acting on behalf of the Commonwealth financing authority, or, where there is no State Rural Credit Organisation, the Commonwealth financing authority itself should have available to it sufficient competent field officers to supervise the activities of settlers and to guide in the planning of work and expenditure.”

“In some States the officers will be officers of the State rural credit organisation; in others, they will be officers of the State Agricultural Department. Whichever scheme is adopted, the essential feature is that the technical advice is efficient and, to that end, the closer the liaison between the Agricultural Department officers and those of the State rural credit organisation, the better; without such liaison, success will not be achieved.”

Then the report deals with what I consider is a very important matter when we are discussing the principles of this Bill, namely, livestock and machinery purchases. It says—

“Supervision of purchases will be particularly necessary in the early years in the case of livestock and the more expensive types of machinery, if the losses through

expenditure on unsatisfactory stock and unnecessary equipment are to be avoided. In some areas, centralised purchases through an approved State Department or State officer would be an advantageous procedure.”

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think that suggestion is one that might well be adopted in this connection, because, as I have said before, it is not much use this Government or any other Government's giving the best possible terms to any settler, whether civilian or ex-serviceman, unless ample provision is made to see that the financial assistance is used to the best advantage of the recipient and the nation.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the hon. member that I have already ruled today that principles only can be dealt with at this stage.

**Mr. PATERSON:** I remember that, Mr. Speaker, and I bow to your ruling in that respect. However, I want to stress the fact that while the Bill does introduce one excellent concession to ex-servicemen settlers in that it grants to them freedom from interest payments for three years, nevertheless I think that while the Government are on this job they might as well make a good job of it. Any job that is worth doing is worth doing well, and not merely half-well; and obviously the job of granting financial concessions to ex-servicemen settlers is a job that is worth doing well. Therefore, I suggest that the Government should give further consideration to the need, first of all, for extending the period during which no interest payments are to be made, and, secondly, that they should give serious consideration to the necessity of reducing the rate of interest on loans.

**Mr. LUCKINS (Maree) (2.58 p.m.):** I have listened with a great deal of interest to the speeches that have been made on this Bill. It seeks to amend four Acts that deal with settlement on the land and agricultural matters generally. It relates to both servicemen and servicewomen. The Bill does not appear to set out any specific conditions for servicewomen but I take it that the Treasurer has in mind the settlement of women who have done defence service in this State.

If it does nothing else but attract back to the land those people who have left it during the last few years, this Bill is very welcome. Like many other speakers, I think more favourable conditions could be given with regard to the rate of interest and advances to obtain the necessary plant to work a farm. The hon. member for Logan has mentioned the conflicting conditions in Queensland today in regard to the valuation of land. It has been pointed out that one soldier may buy a piece of land worth £5,000 and go to the Agricultural Bank for an advance of 80 per cent. of that sum. After paying the £5,000 in all good faith he finds that he is up against one or two obstacles.

He has to get over the hurdle at the Sub-Treasury of the Commonwealth, which has to do with the buying and selling of land.

Then he has to get finance. I take it that the Agricultural Bank will offer him guidance in this connection to see that he does not pay more than its true value. I fear that the Treasurer is going to meet with many obstacles, and so I suggest that the Bill should contain conditions—

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order! Again I would remind the hon. member that the subject of introducing new principles into the Bill should have been considered at the initiatory stage.

**Mr. LUCKINS:** I bow to your ruling, Mr. Speaker. I was coming to the point where a man, having got the land, looks for an advance. Under the Bill he is entitled to get an advance up to 80 per cent. of the value of the land but difficulties may arise between the bank and the purchaser. I feel sure that facilities will be available to settle servicemen and others, to give them the protection of the Crown or the department in the buying of the land. I am prompted to say that because I know from my own experience in this State that many blocks of land have been sold in excess of their true value and now is the time to get down to the basis of land valuation—

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order! Land valuation is not one of the principles of the Bill. I ask the hon. member to confine his remarks to the principles contained in the Bill.

**Mr. LUCKINS:** I will leave the subject of land valuations and come to interest rates. I am not in favour of charging interest at 4 per cent. to the men and women who have rendered a service to this country. I should like the Treasurer to reconsider that point and see if it is not possible to give some concession to the men and women who have given the best part of their lives to the defence of Australia. Let us acknowledge our indebtedness to them for their wonderful service. We understand that the Commonwealth Government are to pass a Bill relating to this very subject and I should like the Treasurer to intimate whether the concessions that will be granted by the Commonwealth will exceed those that it is proposed to give in the Bill. If the Commonwealth conditions are better than those now proposed the Treasurer should go a step further and make the State Bill a better one than the Commonwealth's. We have said in this Chamber and out of it that nothing is too good for the returned soldier. Here we have an opportunity of honouring our ideas in this connection to both the men and women of the fighting services and thus we have an opportunity of encouraging and helping them to engage in farming and other pursuits that will be a benefit to them and to the State in every way.

**Mr. EDWARDS (Nanango) (3.4 p.m.):** This is a very important Bill, and I am sure the Government realise that it relates to a tremendous question, and that its success or failure means a great deal to the State. It is extremely important first of all to see that the men who have returned and those who will return in the future have at least a fair

chance to become successful settlers in this State.

Therefore it is necessary that the Government, after providing finance to enable the settler to go on the land, should watch his progress very closely. If they find that any provision of this Bill is not sufficiently generous they should take immediate steps to alter it. By doing so they will help the settler to make a success of his undertaking and at the same time buttress land settlement. That is a very important question in any developmental scheme, apart altogether from the individual aspect. If, as happened after the last war, any group-settlement scheme fails that failure will react against the welfare of this State and discourage people not only from going on the land but from continuing on it and making a success of their undertakings. Therefore, assistance given to every soldier and every civilian under this Bill means, if it is a success, success not only for the individual but for the district as well, and indirectly for the State. That is why I say the problem is a very big one.

Although the Bill seems generous to a degree the Government nevertheless should carefully watch its administration, and if any flaw is discovered that militates against its success it should be corrected immediately. After the World War I. many soldiers were placed on land where the trees would not have been ringbarked by any practical farmer because it was absolutely useless. Unfortunately many of those settlers were allowed to linger on in groups until they were compelled to walk off the land. A wrong and bad impression of land settlement was thus created and incalculable injury done the State. We do not desire that a similar set of circumstances should recur. On this occasion the Government have a big advantage. They know what resulted from the soldier-settlement schemes of the last war. If they do not benefit by the mistakes then made then the fault will be theirs. A settler will spend years of his life on the land before he proves whether it is or is not what it was represented to be. I therefore plead with the Government and every member of the Government, and the Labour Party too, to make land settlement under this Bill "the greatest success ever."

By doing that, not only will they be helping the soldier settler and the civilian settler, but they will also help to induce capital to come to this country, and attract good settlers from the other States. For many years we have been trying to induce settlers to come here without achieving the success we expected. As a result of my long experience on the land I am of the opinion that no State can have laws of value unless those laws are altered as conditions change. Seasonal conditions are not to be relied on, particularly in land settlement. For instance, we may get very good seasons for a run of years, and the settlers in certain districts may do remarkably well, but the settlers not more than three miles away may be going broke after having used all the advances they could get from the private

banks or the Government. It is not always because men are failures that they do not meet with success, but because of the unfavourable climatic conditions.

I notice the hon. member for Dalby is here, so I will quote an instance of what occurred in an area with which he is acquainted. The settlers in this area were getting on their feet and doing remarkably well until about two and a-half years ago when a drought set in that has continued ever since. They have not had sufficient rain during that period to run surface water, although not many miles away settlers in other districts are doing remarkably well. I quote that as an illustration of some of the difficulties settlers on the land are faced with.

Assistance for the conservation of fodder and water and for the purchase of machinery is of value as long as the settlers can take advantage of it. I have heard a great deal of argument in this House about methods of conservation of fodder. After giving this matter much thought, I have come to the conclusion that the best method of bringing about fodder conservation is not to endeavour to get the farmer to do that work, because if he does it he must neglect doing some other work on his property and thus lose as much as he would gain. I think we should evolve some system whereby contractors will do this work. In my district at the present time, after the peanut threshing is finished, hundreds of tons of peanut hay are available, and owing to the tremendous amount of work the farmer has to do during that period of the year it is impossible for him to store it properly, so that it will be of value later on when the season is dry.

At the present time a man is operating in my district with a hay-making machine, baling that hay at a certain cost. Many of the settlers are employing him to do that work and thus making provision against a possible drought. That is valuable work, not only to themselves but in the interests of the State, and we should work along such lines—allowing the farmer to continue with his ordinary farming routine and so losing nothing of value to the State. We must have some scheme by which security can be obtained and at the same time the farmer is able to continue with his ordinary production, and unless that can be done I am convinced that we shall not have this State developed as we should like it.

Conservation of water is another matter of importance.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr. EDWARDS:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am coming back to the Bill. I had intended to deal with the conservation of water, and I suppose that some of the finance made available under the Bill will help the settler in that direction. I have no doubt, after very many years of practical work on the land in Queensland and the other States, that land is primarily the most important but water must come second. There is no

use having conservation of fodder or anything else on the land unless water is obtainable. Many settlers have failed in the days that have gone because of the shortage of water. It is quite impossible for a settler to make a success of his occupation on the land without water and this applies to the soldier as much as to any other settler.

In conclusion, I sincerely hope that although the Government have made this effort, which I believe is sincere, to do something in the interests of our soldier settlers, they will watch the position step by step and if any alteration is necessary for the betterment and in the interests of the soldier and ordinary settlers of this great State that alteration will be made immediately.

**Hon. E. M. HANLON** (Ithaca—Treasurer) (3.18 p.m.), in reply: Listening to the debate this afternoon I have discovered that it is obvious that hon. members have been unable to realise that this Bill is an entirely different measure from the land settlement legislation that is to come later. The soldier settlement scheme is one devised by the Commonwealth and one in which the States are sharing. It has nothing to do with this Bill. This is merely a Bill amending the Act governing the Agricultural Bank to enable that Act to give better service to the people.

**Mr. Edwards:** That is settlement, surely.

**Mr. HANLON:** Not necessarily. All the operations that will follow as a result of this Bill may for all we know deal with land already settled and developed. The soldier settlement scheme is to provide for increasing settlement by placing soldiers on the land—acquiring lands that we propose to put at the disposal of ex-servicemen and to give them training to enable them to establish themselves. This Bill will enable these men, with some knowledge of the land who have a desire to get on the land, to establish themselves by means of the money they have themselves saved plus aid given by the Agricultural Bank—to enable them to get on the land while they are keen and fresh and when they have the financial reserves to enable them to take advantage of this measure.

Several hon. members have mentioned that the whole soldier land settlement scheme would be better if it provided for the Governments to subsidise interest so that the settlers would not be carrying a burden. We put that proposal up to the Commonwealth. I believe myself that the Commonwealth Government could give a subsidy of at least 1½ per cent. to 2 per cent. in interest with less cost to the Commonwealth than the scheme it has now. I think then, with the aid of the State, the soldier land settlement scheme that will be coming up at a later date would probably be more successful. I believe the cost would not be any more; possibly it would be less, and the possibilities of success would be greater.

Mention has also been made of the desirability of selecting and training men who are

going to be aided under this Bill. This Bill does not propose to regiment or direct anybody. This is a proposal to aid those who want to get on the land and carve out their own livelihood, to let them do it how they like. They put their own savings into it. We advance money on the security of their properties, and they have a right to demand to be allowed to carve out their livelihood, to make their living in their own way without any interference from anybody. We do not propose to interfere with them in any way. On the other hand, we have officers of the Agricultural Bank always available to give advice to any soldier settler whether he is a borrower or not. Mention was made of cases in which prospective buyers were disappointed because the bank would not agree to the valuation a private valuer had approved for a property the soldier proposed to buy. The Agricultural Bank has to take a factual view of the value of land. It cannot afford to take an inflated view or an optimistic view of the value of land.

**Mr. Sparkes:** No institution can.

**Mr. HANLON:** If it did that it would not be helping the soldier settler to security and success, but it would be helping him on the road to ruin. We know that land has been returning fantastic incomes to certain growers, because of the artificial inflated war prices. There are any amount of people who have been growing vegetables, for instance, over the last few years, on small well-cultivated properties and who have been earning anything from £1,000 to £2,000 a year. If they can sell such farms as going concerns to some optimistic Diggers who think they are going to get that income in future years from such farms, it will be very fine for the vendors but very bad for the Diggers. The bank will do its best to protect intending borrowers, whether they are soldiers or not, from making such mistakes.

We have coming back many thousands of men who will have on the average some hundreds of pounds in savings, savings that have been earned in the hardest way in which money can ever be earned—on active service—and we also have in the community any amount of people who will quickly relieve them of the burden of those savings by the quickest and slickest methods that possibly can be devised. This Parliament is anxious to protect the returning servicemen from exploitation, and the bank has established a service system to any Digger who wants advice, whether he intends to be a borrower or not. If he is considering buying a property he can consult the officer of the bank at headquarters here, or any of its inspectors in the country, and receive advice as to what they think is the real value of the property, apart altogether from whether he is going to be a client of the bank. We have advised all soldiers' organisations to that effect. We have advised them that if any returning serviceman is considering buying a property he can get an estimate of its value from a source that will certainly not be likely to put an inflated value on it, and in this way

the intending buyer will have some indication of its real value.

The Leader of the Opposition suggested that perhaps we should use some of the Post-war Development and Reconstruction Trust Fund in order to grant a lower rate of interest for this purpose. However, that fund is trust money set aside for spending in the immediate post-war years. Money that is being lent by the Agricultural Bank is being lent with a currency of 38 years, so that we could hardly wait for the expiration of that period to go on with the necessary post-war work.

**Mr. Pie:** Where does this money come from?

**Mr. HANLON:** It has been allocated from Loan Fund to the Bank. The concession in interest will be paid from Consolidated Revenue. Provision is made on the Estimates for it. We cannot, of course, meet the interest concession from the Loan Fund—it is a legitimate revenue charge—but the advances made are from the Loan Fund because they are repayable and will come back into the fund again.

There also appears to be some confusion about the retrospectivity of this legislation. Any soldier at all who has served in this war and has returned and taken up land and borrowed money from the Agricultural Bank will receive the benefit of this legislation. Many ex-servicemen have already borrowed from the bank for the purpose of improving their holdings or buying holdings, and immediately on the passage of this legislation their interest-free period of three years will begin. If a soldier already has a holding that he may have mortgaged to a private bank, he will automatically get the benefit of the concessions contained in this Act if he obtains an advance from the Agricultural Bank to free his mortgage to the private bank, provided of course that his security is all right. There is no doubt about that.

**Mr. Nicklin:** Will it be the policy of the bank to give favourable consideration to transfers from private banks?

**Mr. HANLON:** Yes.

**Mr. Nicklin:** That has not been its policy up to the present.

**Mr. HANLON:** A different set of conditions operated during the period the Leader of the Opposition has in mind. He referred to the policy of the bank in the past not to take over loans that have been made by private banks. That was done for a very good reason. Every private bank that found it had backed a loser or held doubtful security so that it was possible it would lose a few shillings, trotted its client along with the greatest of generosity to the Agricultural Bank. In no instance has a private bank ever urged borrowers who were in a secure position to go to the Agricultural Bank, but if a private bank has found that it has backed a loser it has tried to push him on to the Agricultural Bank.

**Mr. Sparkes:** The borrower himself might want to change-over.

**Mr. HANLON:** The borrower could not do much changing once he got into the grip of a private bank.

Reference has also been made by one hon. member to what he termed a weakness in the Agricultural Bank in that it lacked personal contact. In war-time we have not the number of officers we should like to have. The whole of the work of this State has been held up to a very great extent because of the shortage of competent officials. We shall not be able to make the progress we should till we can get our officers back from the various services.

**Mr. Pie:** You will be getting a lot very soon.

**Mr. HANLON:** We hope so, but we are finding difficulty in getting ones that we want. You cannot merely select anybody and make him an inspector of the bank; an inspector must be a man with the requisite qualifications for the job. For instance, surveys are required and so you must have men who are qualified as surveyors and men with other necessary qualifications to carry out this technical work associated with land settlement. In short, we must have men with the required qualifications and it is not easy to get them today but we shall get them in the course of time as they become available.

It was pointed out by some hon. members that a borrower from a private bank had an alleged advantage over a borrower from the Agricultural Bank in that the private bank made quick decisions, but such an advantage is more imaginary than real. If I am making an advance, for instance up to 50 per cent. of the value of the property, I can make a very easy guess as to its value, but if on the other hand I am making an advance up to 80 per cent. of its value I have to be more careful.

**Mr. Sparkes:** How many make an advance up to 80 per cent.?

**Mr. HANLON:** The Agricultural Bank does and that is why it has to be extremely careful in valuations. The private banks will not go as close to that margin and consequently they do not need to make the same careful investigation that the Agricultural Bank does. The hon. member knows as well as I do that if you are making only a small advance on a property and the valuation is good it is easy to say, "Yes, I will lend you so much without having a survey," but if you are making an advance of a bigger proportion of the value of the property, and especially if the borrower may be struggling for a while, the property has to be valued very carefully.

**Mr. Sparkes:** If you make advances up to 80 per cent. of the values today you will be in trouble in the future.

**Mr. HANLON:** That is one of the things we have to face. I hope the hon. member does not think that we are going to get out

of our post-war period with the rehabilitation of nearly 1,000,000 persons without losing a great deal of money.

**Mr. Sparkes:** I do not doubt that.

**Mr. HANLON:** We have to face that situation. We are going to have losses but I am glad to think that we are going to have only financial losses and not losses of life, because it is much easier to bear financial loss in the settling of people in industry than the loss of life that has been going on for years. I do not think anyone is so optimistic as to think that we can turn the whole of the economy of the Commonwealth upside down and then hope to accomplish the rehabilitation of all the people without financial loss. If for instance land values fall, we must put up with it—there is no doubt about that—and we shall have to help the people who will suffer thereby. But if on the other hand land values rise then these settlers may do quite well out of it. Up to the present the general tendency seems to be that there will be a rise in land values in Australia.

Some hon. member suggested that the advances to be made to co-operative societies for the purchase of machinery should be greater. The proposal in the Bill is to make advances up to £2,000 to co-operative societies without any contributions by them and that is in addition to the section already in the Act providing for advances by the bank up to two-thirds of the total advance, or a maximum of £2,500. Although that section has been in operation for some time the co-operative societies have not taken advantage of it.

**Mr. Nicklin:** Taxation is the trouble.

**Mr. HANLON:** That section has been in operation for some time and the co-operative societies could have taken advantage of it if they had had a genuine wish to help in the conservation of fodder. The position now will be that the co-operative societies can get an advance up to £3,700 by them putting in £850 themselves. Any society that is big enough to have a machinery pool valued at £4,000 can afford to put in £850 itself. On the other hand there may be some co-operative organisations that would be very doubtful security for £50. They may have troubles to contend with arising particularly from the fact that they have a small number of suppliers and so it would be impossible for them to carry a great load of debt. The major companies could well have taken advantage of section 22 of the Act which would have enabled them to obtain a total advance of £3,700 by contributing £850 themselves. That I think is very liberal.

The hon. member for Bowen suggested that provision should be made for the widow of a serviceman to receive an advance so that she could carry on a farm. I think that the wife of any man, or children of any man who has given years of service and offered his life in defence of his country, deserves something better than sweating their souls out in running a farm.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. HANLON:** If we look to the widows of our servicemen or their children to undertake an occupation whereby they will be called on to milk cows and run pigs in order to gain a livelihood, then we have nothing to be proud of. That, of course, is the Communist outlook—that the female being equal to the male must take her share of the labour of the community. We do not look at that question in the same way. We regard it as a woman's right to be kept and looked after by the husband she marries; we regard her as having the right to play her part in her home and have the freedom to look after her children if she wishes to do so. We do not believe in any man's having the right to marry a woman and her then having to go out and slave and sweat. If she is unfortunate enough to be left a widow because her husband offered his life in defence of his country then it is a poor lookout if she has to go and slave on a farm for a crust. This country has promised the man who fought something better than that for his services.

These are the only suggestions or criticisms that were made during the debate on the Bill. I ask hon. members to realise that this Bill is in no way connected with the Commonwealth soldier land settlement scheme. That scheme envisages the taking over of large areas of land all over the Commonwealth that is suitable for settlement, and its preparation for soldier settlers. It envisages erection on that land of accommodation, fencing, and water supplies, as well as the training of the prospective settlers before they take it up. This Bill merely deals with the Agricultural Bank's assistance to prospective borrowers from the bank.

Motion (Mr. Hanlon) agreed to.

#### COMMITTEE.

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Mann, Brisbane, in the chair.)

Clauses 1 to 3, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 4—Amendment of section 27; Term of loan in respect of discharged members of the forces and other eligible persons.

**Mr. PIE (Windsor) (3.39 p.m.):** I move the following amendment:—

“On page 2, line 46 after the word ‘Forces’ insert the words—

‘and also a discharged member of the Forces of the British Commonwealth of Nations.’”

I move this amendment because, in my opinion, after this war many people will come to this country who have fought for us right throughout the world. I refer particularly to Britishers, Canadians, and New Zealanders. Many people consider Australia today as the young man's land of opportunity. Great Britain has been turned into an agricultural country because agriculture has become Britain's No. 1 industry.

Therefore I feel, now that this conflict is over and when immigration is resumed, many

servicemen will want to come to this country. The Treasurer visualised this in his reply on the introduction of the Bill when he said—

“If we can get British servicemen as settlers, O.K.—it will be done easily. We had men from New Zealand fighting side by side with Australians in defence of Australia. If there is a chance of getting prospective settlers from New Zealand then an order in council can make the provisions of this Bill available to them.”

I agree that on page 3 provision is made to enable the Governor in Council by order in council from time to time to include any type of serviceman under the Bill. The Treasurer has it in his mind that he is willing to accept any serviceman from the British Commonwealth of Nations, so why not make that clear? Let there be no doubt about the matter. I feel there should be no doubt in our legislation, and if the hon. gentleman has in mind that this State should accept servicemen from the British Commonwealth of Nations why not make the provision in the Bill?

I think it is obvious that in the post-war period—in the immediate rehabilitation period—we shall get many men from all parts of the world wanting to come here and settle; therefore why should it be left to the Governor in Council by order in council to make it available to them? I think this should be a provision of the Bill so that when we are selling our wares amongst the British Commonwealth of Nations we can say that provision is made in our laws for their men as well as ours. The amendment would make it a better Bill and remove any doubt that we are not willing to accept members of the British Commonwealth of Nations, who also have fought for us.

**Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Treasurer) (3.43 p.m.):** I do not propose to accept the amendment. On the initiation of the Bill it was stated that provision was made for the Governor in Council by order in council to extend the benefits of this Bill to any section or class of people. If it is found advisable to do it that can be done, but we are keeping our feet on the ground in this matter. The first job is to settle our own people on the land; the people who have enlisted in this country and fought for this country have first call. When they have been helped it will be time enough to consider extending it to people from overseas. We look forward to having later on quite a number of migrants from the Old Country who were members of the fighting services. The Governor in Council will be at liberty to give them help when that occasion arises. We are going to be fully occupied in trying to meet our obligations to our people—to the men and women who have been enlisted in our services. Our first duty is to them. Having attended to them we take power to extend the scope of the Bill as far as we like.

**Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba—Leader of the Opposition) (3.44 p.m.):** I support the suggestion put forward by the hon. member for Windsor, although I appreciate the point



made by the Treasurer that our first obligation is to our own men; everybody will admit that. I also appreciate that the Treasurer said in his introductory remarks that it is proposed to widen the scope of the Bill if necessary later.

We have to get settlers into this country, and it is not a bit of use our merely saying we will do this some time in the future. It is much better to have something in black and white that people can see.

**Mr. Hanlon:** It is in black and white.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** They must have some knowledge that they can receive assistance to enable them to settle on the land here. After all, the request for assistance from some of the Dominion Forces will not come in four or five years' time. I venture the opinion that some of the British forces now in Australia may require assistance in the very near future. Some of them desire to remain here and become settlers, and if we can find the finance to help them to settle here I do not see why we should not. Judged on the financial position of the State at the moment, there is no reason why we cannot have sufficient money not only to deal with our own men but also to extend the privileges of this Bill to members of the British and Dominion forces. Although it is the intention, as the Treasurer has said, to bring in these men by order in council, the inclusion of this amendment would have a definite propaganda effect in getting desirable types of settlers here, members of the forces of the Motherland and of the other Dominions. In the amendment suggested by the hon. member for Windsor we would have something that everyone could see, telling him that this State is prepared to give financial aid to the discharged members of the forces of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

**Mr. Hanlon:** We have left it open for members of the forces from any part of the Commonwealth to come in on this.

**Mr. PIE (Windsor) (3.47 p.m.):** I am glad the Leader of the Opposition supports me in this matter. Every second day I am receiving letters from British personnel in Australia who desire to remain in Australia, and I understand arrangements are now being made for the British Government to discharge men in Australia if they so desire. The Australian nation can never live in the future with only seven million people, and if we can get one more person into this country willing to become an Australian, we should encourage him. Surely to goodness it is the least we can do?—After all, who actually won the first round of this war? Surely it was the people of Britain in the Battle for Britain? There is no question about that.

**Mr. Hanlon:** There were Australians in the Battle for Britain.

**Mr. PIE:** I am not entering into an argument on that matter. This nation cannot hope to live with only seven million people. We shall not be allowed to in the world set-up, no matter what we may say.

If we want to remain British—and I think everyone in this Chamber wishes to do so—we must encourage these migrants to come here. The amendment moved is of greater consideration from the Treasurer than he has given it, because "a person" includes any class of person that the Governor in Council may by order in council include. That is absolutely indefinite. It means nothing. If we can make it clear in this Bill that it includes discharged members of the forces of the British Commonwealth of Nations, surely it makes it a better Bill and will encourage immigrants from England to settle in this country.

**Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Treasurer) (3.49 p.m.):** The hon. member is seeking limelight out of this question, but he is not going to get it. What does he mean by the discharged members of the forces of the British Commonwealth of Nations? Are the people of India and the coloured peoples of Africa and elsewhere to have preference over our Australian boys? The hon. member should be a little bit factual in these matters. His enthusiasm to get a little political limelight has altogether warped his sense of proportion. We have to be just to our own boys before we are generous to anybody else.

Our first obligation is to the men and women of this country who enlisted for service in this country. What other Dominion is giving us the privileges it is giving its own servicemen? I suppose Australia is the only country that is offering to people from other parts of the British Empire the privileges that we are giving our own servicemen. All we are doing here is laying it down definitely that provision can be made for people from other parts of the Empire when the proper time arrives. In the initial stages it is the plain duty of the Parliaments of the Commonwealth to see that nobody gets in ahead of our own boys. They have first claim on us and, as far as we can possibly do it, we are going to see that nobody gets in ahead of them. Once they are satisfied then we can look after the members of the fighting services from Britain or the other Dominions.

I am sure no-one will suggest that the discovery the hon. member for Windsor has made that we need more population has not been made long ago by other hon. members of this Parliament. We know that and we are endeavouring to the best of our ability to spread and develop this country. As a matter of fact, I can tell the hon. member that Queensland is the only State in Australia in which the rural population is increasing—and was for many years before the war. In every other part of the Commonwealth the rural population is decreasing. In Queensland it is increasing, not by accident but as the result of a definite policy pursued by this Government, a policy of granting concessions to people in the outback, a policy of providing for the people in the outback amenities that previously were available only to people in the capital cities.

**Mr. Brand:** You are not increasing the population outback.

**Mr. HANLON:** If the hon. member will only take the trouble to peruse statistics he will find that the rural population in Queensland has been increasing.

**Mr. Brand:** Not outback.

**Mr. HANLON:** Quite a number from outback went a little bit further than Isis or the coast. The population of the outback has gone down during the war years because the fellows who should be populating the outback have been fighting overseas for this country, but they will be back there shortly, please God, and when they are back there, we will help them and we will give them preference above all people from anywhere in the world in settling this country.

**Mr. AIKENS** (Mundingburra) (3.53 p.m.): I am inclined to vote for this amendment and I deprecate the attitude of the Treasurer in trying to read into the amendment something that I cannot see there. If the amendment contained what the hon. gentleman suggests it does, I would not vote for it; I would side with him. If the amendment provided that a discharged member of the forces of the British Commonwealth of Nations was to have preference over the Australian soldier I should be the first to vote against it. I agree with the Treasurer that our duty is to our own boys.

**Mr. Hanlon:** Our first duty is to our own boys. Our duty to the others follows.

**Mr. AIKENS:** As I see it, if the amendment is carried the clause will read—

“A discharged member of the Forces and also a discharged member of the Forces of the British Commonwealth of Nations.”

That merely places the British soldier, the Canadian soldier, the South African soldier, and the New Zealand soldier on the same footing as the Australian soldier. As far as I can see, it does not give preference to any of those soldiers over the Australian soldier. That is something for which I would not stand.

I think this Parliament has reached a fairly low level when the Acting Premier can stand up and suggest that any hon. member of this Assembly would want to give preference to a coloured man over the Australian soldier. At the present time, the Labour Party, of which the Acting Premier is a member, controls the Commonwealth Government of this State, and it and it alone has responsibility for the administration of the immigration laws.

Those immigration laws do not permit a coloured man to come into this country whether he is a soldier of the forces of the British Commonwealth of Nations or not. If a coloured man was allowed to come into this country and enjoy the provisions of this Bill, it could be done only by and with the consent of the Government to which the Treasurer belongs.

**Mr. Hanlon:** We may have a Communist Government, which believes in yellow and black.

**Mr. AIKENS:** A Communist Government might be infinitely preferable to the Government who occupy the Treasury benches in Queensland today.

If I had been unable to read the amendment clearly and if the contention of the Treasurer is correct, then I think the English language means nothing. If a British soldier, or a South African soldier, or a Canadian soldier or a New Zealand soldier comes here, I cannot see why he should not be brought within the scope of this Bill at the present time. The Treasurer himself admits that the Bill makes provision for the bringing of these men within the scope of the Bill as the Governor in Council may from time to time determine. If it is the ultimate object to bring these British soldiers within the scope of the Bill, why not provide for it in the first clause instead of the second clause?

**Mr. L. J. BARNES** (Cairns) (3.57 p.m.): I rise to oppose the amendment. I feel somewhat like the ex-Premier of Queensland when he made this statement on one occasion: “Do unto others as we should like to have done to ourselves, but let us do unto ourselves first.” There is a shortage of 250,000 houses in Australia at the present time, and is not the Australian servicemen entitled to some priority? If we were to open the gates wide to the whole of the British Empire, it would be something similar to a father’s being charitable to all other children before his own. Let us be charitable to our own first. Then, as the Treasurer has suggested, the gates can be opened wide by the Governor in Council and these privileges can be extended to soldiers from other parts of the British Empire. Till our Australian servicemen are provided for, let us do unto ourselves first.

**Mr. PIE** (Windsor) (3.58 p.m.): I desire to contradict the Treasurer. I have no desire to obtain any political limelight. I am merely repeating what he himself suggested when this Bill was being introduced. He said we would accept these people into this country of ours. It is here in his own words if he cares to read it again. The hon. gentleman knows that no Indian or black South African could come into this country. The immigration laws prevent that. The only thing my amendment intends is to make these people eligible to come under the scope of this Bill. That is all. I think that is the least we can do for the people of the British Commonwealth of Nations. We should make them eligible to come within the scope of something that will help in the development of this country.

**Mr. Hanlon:** They are eligible now.

**Mr. PIE:** They are not eligible according to this Bill. They are eligible only under a provision that is not definite, that is, that the Governor in Council by order in council may do something, and that can mean anything. I want to make it quite clear that a discharged member of the forces of the British Commonwealth of Nations will be eligible to share in these benefits. I do not want it left

to the Governor in Council or to an order in council. Let us put it into this Bill. The Treasurer says he means that.

**Mr. Hanlon:** The Bill says it.

**Mr. PIE:** The Bill does not say it. It leaves it to the Governor in Council or to an order in council. The Treasurer says he means that. If he means it, then let him put it in the Bill. That is all I ask. If he does not mean what he says, on page 272 of "Hansard", then leave it as it is. The object of the amendment is to make such persons as are mentioned therein eligible to share in the concessions given by the Bill, nothing more.

**Mr. MAHER (West Moreton) (4.1 p.m.):** I do not think it matters very much because in my opinion not a great number of discharged servicemen will take advantage of the provisions of the Bill. I do not know the nature of the legislation that may go through the Commonwealth Parliament relating to this subject, but I am inclined to think that it will provide for the payment of a living allowance for a certain period to soldiers who go on the land, and so I think that the Federal legislation will attract far more returned service men than this Bill. If the soldier has the option of accepting the terms of the Federal legislation, whereby he receives a living allowance while he fits into the scheme of things on the land, as against the three years free of interest provided for in the Bill and which is an outstanding principle of it, I feel that he will by-pass whatever advantages will accrue to him under this Bill. In other words, I feel that the Agricultural Bank will not be approached by very many returned servicemen once they know the full terms and scope of the Federal legislation on the subject. So in those circumstances, I think the debate in respect to this amendment is really of not much avail.

There is a provision in the Bill, as the Acting Premier points out, that can be employed by the Governor in Council to meet any situation that arose, such as that envisaged by the amendment. I should think that if a large body of ex-servicemen from Great Britain or any British dominion made representations to the Queensland Government to be given the advantage of this legislation in order to settle on the land, I do not think for a moment that the Government would not endeavour to meet such a request and there is special provision in the Bill to do so. I hope, however, that there will be some opportunity for the ex-servicemen to take advantage of any concessions offered by the Bill, but, as I said a while ago, I think the honours will rest with the Federal legislation once it becomes thoroughly known, and so most of the returned servicemen who will go on the land will do so under the terms of the Federal legislation.

**Mr. POWER (Baroona) (4.3 p.m.):** The Bill itself is clear. It makes provision for preference to Australian servicemen, and it also provides that the Government can, if they so desire, by order in council, bring under the operations of the Bill ex-members of the

fighting services of the British Commonwealth of Nations. We know that from time to time orders in council are issued to deal with such subjects. I remember that not so long ago the hon. member for Windsor was very keen on bringing German children into this country, and I wonder now whether he wants to give preference under this Bill to German people, whether he later on wants to bring in their relatives to take advantage of this legislation.

We know that the control of the immigration laws is in the hands of the Federal Government, not the State Government. Let us suppose that there was a change of Government in the Commonwealth tomorrow, that the Tories got control of the national Parliament. Who knows that they may not alter the immigration laws to do away with the White Australia policy, and so allow people who fought against the members of the British Commonwealth of Nations to come into this country and take advantage of this Bill. Our first duty is to the men and women of this country who fought to save it, and this Government know where their duty lies.

Therefore we should in every possible way protect the rights of the men of this country who have fought for it and then by this provision give the Government power to issue an order in council to extend its provisions. This Bill now prevents anyone who is allowed to enter this country from participating in the benefits we have provided for our returned soldiers. I do hope that the German children, as advocated by the hon. member for Windsor, will not be brought into this country to the detriment of our Australian children.

**Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (4.6 p.m.):** Some hon. members are being a little carried away. Let us study closely what the Bill says. The Bill provides for all the dangers outlined by the Treasurer and the hon. member for Baroona, because paragraph (b) reads—

"A person included in any class of persons which the Governor in Council may, by Order in Council, from time to time approve."

It has been stated—and it is quite right to suppose these things—that the present Commonwealth Government might be superseded by another Government of another political colour. When we talk of Communists allowing coloured people to enter this country we must remember also that an ecclesiastic of the Roman Catholic hierarchy also has expressed himself in favour of the entry of coloured people into this country. So if the Commonwealth Government changed to a Communist trend, it would mean throwing overboard the White Australia policy, or if we had any other Government thinking along the lines of this ecclesiastic of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, the door may be thrown open to the entry of coloured immigrants to this country. That is the disadvantage—there is the possibility that the Government will change and black people will be allowed to enter this country.

I want to point out to the hon. member for Baroona that there is also a possibility of the present State Government's being changed, and also a possibility that when it is changed that the new Government will have the administration and implementation of paragraph (b). That new State Government then will have the right and power under paragraph (b), which has been put into this Bill by the Treasurer, to grant to these coloured people preference over white soldiers of the British Commonwealth of Nations. That is the point we have to be careful of.

Let us assume that all the fears expressed by the hon. gentleman will materialise. Let us assume that the present Labour Government will be superseded by another Government that will open the doors of this country to a flood of black immigration, that, is, that we shall have on the Treasury benches of this country a Government in favour of the employment of black labour. If we do not accept the amendment of the hon. member for Windsor then that Government will have power under this Bill to place these black immigrants within the scope of this Bill to the exclusion of the white soldier of the British Empire. I should not be in favour of that. If we deal with suppositions let us peer into the future as far as the eye can see and guard against all possibilities that may eventuate consequent on political turmoil and changes in this country. Let us face up to the fact that paragraph (b) can mean anything. Let us point out that paragraph (b) can also mean everything if we have a Government in power who can implement it. Paragraph (b) not only gives the present Government—and I pay them the compliment of thinking that they are desirous of implementing paragraph (b)—power to give the white British servicemen preference over coloured servicemen of any nationality but power to implement the clause as they think fit. I think it would be wise, and I do not think it would be great political propaganda or political limelighting, to put in the amendment, "a discharged member of the forces of the British Commonwealth of Nations." I reiterate that paragraph (b) can be just as dangerous as it appears to be innocuous.

**Mr. DUGGAN (Toowoomba—4.10 p.m.):** One would imagine from the enthusiasm of the hon. member for Mundingburra that he had discovered something new in the constitutional history of the State, because provision is made for power for the Governor in Council to admit certain people of the British Commonwealth of Nations. There is nothing to prevent any Government from repealing the whole or any section of legislation placed on the statute books at any time. Every Government are responsible to the constituency for their actions. It does not matter whether the power is given under statute to be implemented by way of order in council or is contained in the statute itself, the Government must accept responsibility for their decisions to exercise it. If the continuance of the Government in office depends on these actions, then the hon. member need not have any fears that this Government will be supplanted

by men either of the Communist Party or representatives of any sectarian party outside. This Government are not concerned with the private opinions of any ecclesiastic, whether he is Roman Catholic or Dr. McLaren, the Presbyterian Moderator, who also argued that we may lift our immigration laws to admit coloured people. This Government are concerned only about the views of the worth-while people in the community—that is, of those who constitute the Labour movement. The Treasurer has declared that we owe a right to those who have made sacrifices, who have sacrificed even their all in many cases, and many of whom have been stricken in health. They are entitled to first consideration in these things.

**Mr. Pie interjected.**

**Mr. DUGGAN:** The question of preference will not come in because if men who are already here, or who will be shortly demobilised come here, if they are given the opportunity sought by the hon. member they will be eligible to submit their applications to the Agricultural Bank for advances. Is anyone going to suggest that there will be sufficient funds for all these people? Will these people have a proper appreciation of the inflated values that prevail in Australia at the present time?

The hon. member for West Moreton could not even be generous enough to say there is some merit in the Bill. He said, "Why worry about the amendment, because the Commonwealth Bill will be much better?" Whose is the primary responsibility for rehabilitation of the members of the fighting services? The Commonwealth Government; it is their responsibility. If this State had had all the requisite powers for finance and to collect dues and excise duties they could offer much more attractive conditions; but this is a start; it is an indication from the meagre resources available that the Government are willing to put aside a substantial proportion of funds for the purpose of rehabilitation of discharged servicemen. Instead of welcoming the Bill we find hon. members, like the hon. member for West Moreton, saying, "Why worry about this paltry concession because the Federal benefits will be much better?" Then we have the hon. member for Mundingburra saying that we shall have a Communist Party or some other Government. We are not concerned about the position of some future party. We have sufficient faith in our philosophy and our political policy to stand on our own feet. As long as the heart of the Labour movement is sound, we have no need to worry about the inclusion of extraneous people whose policy is foreign to that of the Australian Labour Party.

**Mr. MAHER (West Moreton) (4.14 p.m.):** I should not like the hon. member for Toowoomba to think that I was altogether opposed to the Bill. On the contrary, I think that as far as it goes it is a good thing. But I cannot escape the conclusion that it would have been better for the State authorities to confer with the Federal authorities and then submitted a co-ordinated Bill—a

Bill that would co-ordinate whatever advantages the Federal Government are able to give with those that can be made available by the State authorities. It really seems rather extraordinary that the State Government should introduce a Bill of this kind on the very eve of the introduction of the Federal legislation. It makes one ask why? Is it that the State Government wish to get under the neck—to use a vulgar expression—of the Federal Government and gain a little cheap propaganda by the announcements that appeared in the Press, and were referred to by the hon. member for Bowen this morning?

They appeared to be in the nature of propaganda to get in a statement that a concession is available for returned men whereas, as the hon. member for Bowen pointed out to the House this morning, these sums of money have been available to civilians and the only difference between the Principal Act and this Amending Bill is that the soldier will get a loan interest-free for three years. Boiled down that is the only difference.

I am not opposing such a concession as that but pointing out that it would have been much better if the Treasurer and the Minister in the Federal Government who is responsible in the matter could have got together and hammered out a Bill containing whatever benefits for discharged servicemen about to go on the land the Federal Government can extend to them, together with whatever benefits the State Government can extend to them, and have one co-ordinated Bill. That is my view and it is a fairly reasonable one. So far as this Bill is concerned, to the extent that it is helpful, it is all to the good.

**Hon. E. M. HANLON** (Ithaca—Treasurer) (4.17 p.m.): It is obvious that the hon. member for West Moreton has not read the Bill so it is no use my going into the matter with him. I wish to refer to the statement made by the hon. member for Windsor. He just cannot play the game in the Committee. He misquotes or misconstrues anything. He went on to say that I said on page 272 of "Hansard" that "This Bill provided for the concession to be available now to discharged people from overseas."

**Mr. PIE:** I rise to a point of order. I did not say that he said this Bill provided that it should be available now for discharged people from overseas. What I did do was to quote exactly from "Hansard" as the hon. gentleman is quoting now.

"If we can get British servicemen as settlers, O.K.—it will be done easily. We had men from New Zealand fighting side by side with Australians in defence of Australia. If there is a chance of getting prospective settlers from New Zealand then an order in council can make the provisions of this Bill available to them."

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! I did not hear the hon. member quote that. If the hon. member denies that he said that, I ask the Acting Premier to take his explanation.

**Mr. HANLON:** I will take his denial. We are used to it.

**Mr. Pie:** You will be sorry.

**Mr. HANLON:** The hon. member never quoted what he has read now. Every member in this Chamber knows it.

**Mr. PIE:** I rise to a point of order.

**Mr. HANLON:** He did not.

**Mr. PIE:** I rise to a point of order. I did quote from here because I have had it here all the while and I ask the Acting Premier to withdraw it. It is offensive to me.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! I will not ask the Acting Premier to withdraw. All I heard—and I listened very attentively to the hon. member for Windsor—was that he quoted some page of "Hansard" but did not quote the transcript he has just quoted.

**Mr. PATERSON:** I rise to a point of order. Is any hon. member in order in quoting from "Hansard" of the present sitting?

**The CHAIRMAN:** Yes, from the current debate.

**Mr. HANLON:** I will proceed to say what I was about to say. The hon. member stated that I said at the initiation of the Bill that what he is moving now is provided in the Bill. That is not true. I will read the first part which the hon. member should have quoted had he been honest—

"Provision is made whereby this Act can be extended to apply to any person—"

**Mr. PIE:** I rise to a point of order. Is the Acting Premier in order in quoting from "Hansard" of this session?

**The CHAIRMAN:** Yes. I have already given a ruling—

**Mr. HANLON:** If the hon. member for Windsor would read the Standing Orders he would not be wasting so much time here. The paragraph the hon. member tried to make out he quoted starts off in this way—

"Provision is made whereby this Act can be extended to apply to any person, as from time to time the Governor in Council approves."

That is the opening statement of the paragraph from which the hon. member misquoted. Mr Pie interjected—

"The Commonwealth Government will not give preference to British returned soldiers."

I replied—

"We do not give preference in our returned soldiers' preference legislation to British soldiers. I do not think it is the right thing to do."

The hon. member will go to any lengths at all to make a case. He certainly has nothing to be proud of in the manner in which he conducts his part of the debate here. We reach the stage when we cannot take the hon. member's word for anything he quotes.

Let us go back further. He cannot deny that he has an affection for introducing

coloured population. We know of his proposal when he came back from Europe to bring some of his little Hun pals here. Let me quote from the current debate as appearing on page 253 of "Hansard" where the hon. member for Windsor said—

"I say we want it to be made very clear that the provisions of this Bill will apply to all men who have served with the United Nations."

He refers to the United Nations, not the British Empire. The hon. member will never catch me misquoting. He refers to the United Nations, which includes Chinese, Filipinos and negroes. That includes the American negroes who have been running away with this city for the last few years. Does the hon. member advocate giving them an opportunity of taking advantage of this Bill? This Government certainly would not consider giving preference or giving these concessions to coloured people or members of the United Nations but we have wisely made provision that when our own boys are looked after we can, by order in council, extend the operations of the Act to any class of persons to whom we think the extension is justified. We can extend it to discharged members of the British expeditionary forces. We can extend it to members of the British fighting services and exclude any coloured people. Apart from everything else, we say that it would be wrong to give preference to British soldiers over our own. We say, "Fix up our own boys first and when they are fixed up we can go further if necessary."

Motion (Mr. Pie) negatived.

**Mr. NICKLIN** (Murrumba—Leader of the Opposition) (4.23 p.m.): This morning I suggested the possibility of including Land Army girls in the provisions of this Bill in addition to women members of the services. I thought that possibly the Treasurer would have given some indication as to how he felt about that matter when speaking in reply on the second reading. By paragraph (b) I take it that the Governor in Council can, if so desired, by order in council, include Land Army girls. I think we must all admit that the Land Army girls are certainly a very eligible type to receive aid. Although they are not officially recognised as members of the forces, they have done a great job on the home front. They have had the advantage of land experience, which would certainly serve them in good stead and make them more eligible as borrowers under the Act than any female members of the fighting services.

**Mr. Walsh:** What about the munition workers.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I am dealing with the Land Army girls at the present time. The munition girls are a different matter altogether.

**Hon. E. M. HANLON** (Ithaca—Acting Premier) (4.24 p.m.): Land Army girls would be in the same position as merchant seamen. The Governor in Council, if he thought necessary to do so, could extend the benefits of the Act to them. I do not know whether there will be any offering or what the position will

be, but if it is thought advisable to do so, they can be included. They are not excluded.

**Mr. PIE** (Windsor) (4.25 p.m.): I take it that the immigration laws will reign supreme over these laws. I take it that we cannot bring into this country any person who is not acceptable to this country under the law dealing with immigration.

Therefore, this story about bringing in Indians and Polynesians and all sorts of people cannot, in my opinion, operate under this Bill because the immigration laws of the Commonwealth of Australia will overrule all State legislation. All this business that has been spoken about is all hooey when it is boiled down to a question who will be allowed into this country. The Commonwealth Government control that and therefore it is wrong to suggest that there is any other purpose behind my suggestion.

Before I sit down, let me refer to the attitude of this Government and the Commonwealth Government towards the Indonesians they have in the Trades Hall. What are they doing about that? They are doing nothing about it.

**Mr. PATERSON** (Bowen) (4.26 p.m.): I move the following amendment:—

"On page 2, after line 52, insert the following new subclause:—

"(b) A widow who has not remarried of a deceased member of the forces and subject to the conditions as provided by section 91 of the Re-establishment and Employment Act, 1945 of the Commonwealth."

Before stating the reasons for my amendment, I think it is advisable that I should briefly set out the main provisions of the clause itself. Clause 4 provides that for the first three years certain persons, who are called "eligible persons," shall be exempt from all interest payments on loan moneys they have obtained from the Agricultural Bank. Now, the meaning of the phrase "eligible person" is therefore very important, and the main meaning is set out in paragraph ii. (a) which reads—

"(ii.) For the purposes of this subsection the term 'eligible person' shall mean—

(a) A discharged member of the Forces who has been honourably discharged after not less than six months' war service, or having, in the opinion of the Minister, been materially prejudiced by reason of his war service, has been honourably discharged after less than six months' war service."

Then there is a second paragraph (b), which says—

"A person included in any class of persons which the Governor in Council may, by Order in Council, from time to time approve."

Paragraph (a) is the only one that sets out a definite, concrete existing meaning of the phrase "eligible person," and in brief it means virtually any ex-servicemen who has

had six months' service or any ex-serviceman who, though he may not have had six months' service, is in the opinion of the Minister materially prejudiced by reason of his war service.

I am putting forward my amendment because I believe the Bill, as it now defines "eligible person," omits one important class of persons that I do not think any member of this Committee would for one single moment suggest was not entitled to the utmost consideration from every Government in Australia, whether State or Commonwealth, and that is the widows of ex-servicemen. During my speech on the second reading, I referred to the fact that a farmer who was a married man with children may have enlisted and unfortunately lost his life as a member of the services. That man has left behind him his widow and his children on a farm that he himself has worked to build up in the days prior to his service. I am suggesting, therefore, that the concessions that this Bill extends to those fortunate members of the services who have come back safe and sound should be extended to the widow of an unfortunate member of the services who will never again return to his native home.

I understand that it has been suggested that the proper thing to do would be to so provide for the widow by way of a pension or some other similar method that she would have no need to live on a farm.

No-one would be more pleased than I if we had legislation that guaranteed that to the war widow, but we as a State Government cannot or do not know that such a sound provision will ever exist on the statute-books of Australia, at any rate within the next few years.

Furthermore, even if we knew that at the present time there existed a provision in the Commonwealth laws to provide for such a widow and even if we knew that there was a provision that guaranteed the widow and her family economic security on a fairly high level for life there is still no harm in my amendment because it says to that widow and her children, "Even if you are economically provided for by good Commonwealth legislation, nevertheless if you desire to remain in your home, if you desire to live there for the rest of your life in that place, in that home and on that farm where your husband passed his married life while he was a civilian with you, if you desire to carry on that farm so that later on when your children are grown up to manhood and are physically able to carry on the farm, we will do all we possibly can to grant you financial assistance." Perhaps that widow wants to live there. She may have the most affectionate associations with the home. She may have affectionate associations with it not only in connection with herself but also in connection with her children. Everyone who has grown up in a home over many years becomes surrounded as it were with extremely affectionate associations no matter how humble that home may have been. There is no hon. member in

this Chamber, I suggest, who does not even now have very affectionate regard for the home in which he grew up as a boy even though he grew up in a home of abject poverty. I am reminded of the sentiments in that patriotic poem—

"Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,

Who never to himself hath said,  
This is my own, my native land."

And so we have the same feelings or I should say every decent person has the same feelings for his home. The words of the poem might fittingly be modified—

"Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,

Who never to himself hath said,  
This is my home, my native home."

That widow should not be placed in such a financial position that she could not tide herself or her children over a difficult period. She may have, as I have already said, affectionate sentiments and associations with the home. I should be the last who would want to say to that widow that she would have to slave on the farm. I do not want to see any woman slave on a farm but the point is that if we accept the amendment, we shall know that at least her slavery will not be as bad as if we had never passed the amendment. At least it will give her the financial concessions postulated by the amendment by virtue of the fact that her husband who was a serviceman was killed at the war.

It may be that this widow if she cannot get some financial assistance from the Government will have to sell the farm at a sacrifice just when her children may have reached the ages of 14, 15, or 16 years, but if she could carry on the farm for the next few years until the children were, say, 18, 19, or 20 years, assuming they are boys, she would be in a position then to say to her son, "Son," whatever his name was, "there is the farm that your father built up, there is the farm that your father would have loved to come back to, but he went to the war and unfortunately was killed, but now because of the Government legislation I can get financial assistance that will enable me to tide myself and this farm over a difficult financial period." As a result of being able to tide the farm over she is able to get to the stage where the children now 14, 15, and 16 years will reach 18, 19, and 20 years and so be able to carry on the farm themselves.

I strongly urge the Treasurer to give serious consideration to the amendment and not cast it aside. He is anxious, as I am anxious, that no woman should have to labour as a slave or as a serf or to labour under bad conditions at manual work on a farm.

Incidentally, we want that to apply not only to war widows but to any widows. We want that to apply not only to female members of the services but to any woman. We do not want to see any woman slave. But that argument does not touch the merit of my amendment. My point is this, if a widow

of the class I have mentioned wants to stop on a farm, it is our duty to give her adequate financial help, and give her the same financial help and concessions as we would have given to her husband had he come back safe and sound.

**Mr. KERB (Oxley) (4.36 p.m.):** I listened very attentively to the hon. member for Bowen, and I certainly must say I feel very keenly the position as he stated it. I think his were very sound grounds. From my point of view the widow of a deceased soldier who may have been on the land before he went to the war, who might be suffering from the burden of very heavy encumbrances, and who may, together with her children, have a love for the land, may be deeply interested in staying there. If the conditions given by the Bill were not extended to her it is conceivable that this woman and her children, who might otherwise have grown up agriculturally minded, may be forced off the land. That would be totally wrong.

The hon. member went on to quote a poem by Sir Walter Scott—

‘Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,  
Who never to himself hath said,  
‘This is my own, my native land.’”

Surely if a man can have those feelings, why should not a woman? He is perfectly justified in submitting his amendment, because to a widow who has a family to keep it is not slavery but a labour of love.

**Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (4.38 p.m.):** I am going to support the amendment. I am amazed that the Government have put us to all the trouble to advance argument in favour of it. I am amazed that the Government did not accept it. The Treasurer has read the word “preference” into this Bill, although I cannot discern it there myself, much as I sought to find it. On the last clause the hon. gentleman said, “We do not believe in giving preference to British servicemen over Australian servicemen.” There was never any suggestion of preference by anyone in this Chamber. No-one has spoken about giving anyone preference over Australian returned soldiers. Now the Treasurer is saying, following of course on the suggestion in respect of the last amendment, that there is the hidden word “preference” in the Bill where no-one can find it.

He now says, in refusing to accept the amendment, that in effect we are going to give the returned soldier preference over the widow of the returned soldier. If preference is in the Bill, although no-one can find it, then the hon. gentleman must apply that preference to all returned soldiers, and every unfortunate widow and her children. He must do so if he believes that the Bill concedes preference, and if he rejects the amendment of the hon. member for Bowen.

Let us take the position that would exist if the amendment was not accepted. Take two farms side by side, one being occupied by a soldier with his wife and family and

the one next door by a farmer who did not go to the war. The Treasurer in his speech on the second reading of the Bill, in reply to a suggestion made by the hon. member for Bowen—I am only quoting him from memory and if I misquote him I do not do so deliberately but stand to be corrected—said—

“If a man marries a woman it is his place to keep that woman and to maintain that woman.” I agree with that. But if it is a man’s duty to keep and maintain his wife it is also his duty to protect his wife. Many men, because they believed it was their duty to protect their wives, went forth to fight and many laid down their lives for the protection of their wives and children. What then is going to be the situation? There is the soldier’s widow on the farm with a growing family. Next to her is a civilian who sells his farm to a returned soldier. The returned soldier who buys that farm can immediately go to the Agricultural Bank, in accordance with this Bill, and get a loan that will be interest-free for three years. The widow of the deceased soldier next door may for sentimental reasons desire to carry on the farm, or she may desire to carry it on because she is an independent woman and believes she has equal rights with men. I have always been led to believe that the Labour Party believed in the emancipation of women. The Labour Party, we thought, believed that women should have equal rights with men. Very well. Supposing the woman says, “This farm I inherited from my dead soldier husband and I am going to carry it on and keep green his memory and build on the solid foundation he has laid down.” If the amendment is not accepted that widow will not be able to go to the Agricultural Bank and get a loan on the same terms as the soldier next door who came into the industry probably for the first time in his life.

I do not suggest the farmer who enters the farming industry for the first time should not have extended to him all the provisions of the Bill, but I do say the widow of the dead soldier should have exactly the same provisions extended to her. What will be the position if she finds that extra finance is necessary to carry on the farm and to employ labour to keep the farm going until her sons inherit the farm from their father, until the sons can carry on the work of the dead soldier father? This Labour Government, who parade their feelings of sympathy for the workers from the public platform—this Labour Government are going to say to the soldier’s widow, “We don’t care one hoot about you, because you are a widow; sell your farm and go and live on the pension the Commonwealth Government provide for you, or else go to the private bankers and pay them the rate of interest they demand, and if the private bankers won’t give you the money you desire go and hand yourself over to the tender mercies of the private interest-mongers.” Is that what the Labour Party stands for? Is that the way it believes in the emancipation of woman? Is that the way it believes the soldier’s widow and the soldier’s children should be cared for?



There is no argument that can deny to the widow of the dead soldier who gave his life fighting for us and for the live soldiers, the same rights and privileges as are provided for the soldier who, fortunately, returned.

**Mr. DECKER** (Sandgate) (4.44 p.m.): I appreciate the sentiment expressed by the hon. member for Bowen, but I do think we are getting away from the principle that has not had much consideration from any Government. As I suggested today, the widow should not be left with a liability to wipe off any debt owing on a farm, a house or any other property.

This State is very much behind in its social legislation. We should apply the practical science of insurance to a thing of this sort. There should be a law to make it compulsory to insure the liability on a farm or a home so that in the event of the breadwinner, the husband's becoming incapacitated or dying the insurance will cover the liability. In doing that we should be doing the proper thing and be on solid ground. There is a tremendous scope for this Government to introduce a scheme under which the widow of a returned soldier, or any widow for that matter, could be assisted under this Act and by which it could be linked with some insurance scheme under which the indebtedness or liability would be liquidated on the total incapacity or death of the breadwinner husband.

**Mr. Aikens:** That would be better still.

**Mr. DECKER:** The State Government Insurance Office operates in Queensland and we have at our disposal the means of having such a scheme actuarially investigated. On the surface there does not appear to be much risk inasmuch as thousands of borrowers live long enough to wipe off their indebtedness. Such a scheme would enable those unfortunate people who had the misfortune to lose their breadwinner to be compensated. We have workers' compensation for the benefit of a man who is injured in his employment. Then why do we not extend similar benefits of insurance to liquidate a debt on a property in the event of the death of the breadwinner? This is a wonderful opportunity for this Government to bring into operation some social legislation of this kind. There has been a crying need for this over the years. I make an appeal today to the Government to give consideration to this aspect of the problem and in the meantime to agree to this amendment, which will give at least some concession to the widow.

**Hon. E. M. HANLON** (Ithaca—Treasurer) (4.48 p.m.): The amendment provides that subject to the Act of another Parliament a certain clause be added to this Bill. Is it possible for one sovereign Parliament to enact legislation that is subject to the Acts of another Parliament? This is a sovereign Parliament legislating on a matter entirely within its constitutional rights and powers. As a sovereign power have we the right to include in our legislation a provision that our legislation is subject to the Acts of another

Parliament? The matter appears to be completely out of order, Mr. Mann, and I should like a ruling on this question.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I have no legal authority on the matter. I do not know if there is anything in the Standing Orders, and consequently I should like to hear argument before giving a ruling.

**Mr. PATERSON** (Bowen) (4.49 p.m.): I am prepared to make a suggestion, if it does not deprive me of my time. I refer the Treasurer to page 3 of the Bill where he will find in the Bill itself expressions that are defined in terms of the Commonwealth Act.

**Mr. Hanlon:** Not subject to the Commonwealth Act.

**Mr. PATERSON:** My amendment does not say "subject to the Act."

**Mr. Hanlon:** It does.

**Mr. PATERSON:** No, it does not say "subject to." It is not subject to any particular Act but merely includes. I think the Parliamentary Draftsman has a copy of the Act. Turn to page 3 of the Bill and it will be found—

"The expression 'war service' shall have the same meaning as in paragraphs (a), (b), (c), (d), and (e) of section 4 of the Re-establishment and Employment 1945 of the Commonwealth."

My amendment simply says—

"A widow who has not re-married of a deceased member of the Forces and subject to the conditions as provided by section 91 of the Re-Establishment and Employment Act, 1945, of the Commonwealth."

As a matter of fact, that was put there as a summary of the provisions. Instead of putting "subject to," I could have used the words of the Commonwealth Act. To save space, in consultation with the Parliamentary Draftsman, I drew up the amendment in this way. We could leave out those words altogether and say—

"A widow who has not re-married of a deceased member of the Forces, provided that—

(a) . . . .

(b) . . . ."

in both (a) and (b) we could have used the words of the Commonwealth Act.

**Hon. E. M. HANLON** (Ithaca—Acting Premier) (4.51 p.m.): I strongly object to the words making it subject to an Act of another Parliament.

The hon. member for Bowen quotes another part of the Bill in which this Parliament says that the words "member of the Forces" shall have the same meaning as in the Commonwealth Act, but that does not mean that we are subject to that Act. The hon. member's amendment distinctly says, "Subject to . . . the Re-Establishment and Employment Act of 1945 of the Commonwealth." I maintain that this is a sovereign Parliament

within its own rights and Constitution. The Constitution is very important, and since we are now dealing with a matter that is entirely the responsibility of the State Parliament—the allocation of funds the property of this Parliament by this Parliament—I think it would be entirely objectionable to provide in a section of the Act that the actions of this Parliament shall be subject to the Act of another Parliament.

**Mr. Brand:** You could not permit it.

**Mr. HANLON:** I do not think it could be permitted. It is not only objectionable but I think it would be distinctly unsound. While it may be possible to make a definition and say that a term in this Act shall have the same meaning as a term in another Act, that is not making the legislation of this Parliament subject to the Act of another Parliament. That Act may be amended or altered and immediately it would mean that the Bill with which we are dealing today would be automatically altered in the same way. I think the whole thing would be not only unconstitutional and unlawful, but most objectionable. It is most objectionable to me that the sovereign rights of this Parliament should be placed under the provisions of an Act of another Parliament. The words making it subject to the Act of another Parliament are very objectionable to me, as I think they are to every other hon. member of this Assembly.

**Mr. PATERSON (Bowen) (4.53 p.m.):** If my amendment suffers from the defect that if the Commonwealth Parliament amended its Act our legislation would also be amended, I remind the Committee of clause 4, subparagraphs (ii.) (a) and (b) on page 3 of the Bill because they are definitely in terms of the Re-Establishment and Employment Act 1945, of the Commonwealth. If that Act is amended, then an Act passed by this sovereign Parliament will immediately be affected by that amendment. I should also like to suggest that there have been Acts passed by this Assembly subject to section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution, which was also passed by another Parliament.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! I think the question of legality is a matter for the House itself. I uphold the point taken by the Treasurer that we cannot place a restriction on any legislation we enact in this House. This Parliament is free to introduce and enact any legislation it desires. I have not a legal mind, and I am not in a position to say whether the legal point raised by the Treasurer is sound, but I give it as my opinion that the amendment is out of order because it places certain restrictions on the actions of this Committee.

**Mr. PATERSON (Bowen) (4.55 p.m.):** Mr. Chairman, would I be in order in moving a further amendment omitting those words?

**Mr. CHAIRMAN:** Is it the wish of the Committee that the hon. member for Bowen be allowed to put his amendment in an amended form?

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. PATERSON:** I move the following amendment:—

“On page 2, after line 52, insert the following new sub-clause:—

‘(b) A widow who has not remarried of a deceased member of the Forces.’”

I do not wish to say anything further. I have already expressed my views on the matter.

**Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Treasurer) (4.56 p.m.):** Looking after the widow of an ex-serviceman is a matter entirely for the Commonwealth Government. Provision is at present made for the payment of a pension to the widow of a member of the forces as follows:—

	A fortnight.		
	£	s.	d.
For the first six months	6	2	0
For the first child ..	1	15	0
For the second child ..	1	5	0
For the third child ..	1	5	0
	£10	7	0
After the first six months	5	0	0
For the first child ..	1	15	0
For the second child ..	1	5	0
For the third child ..	1	5	0
	£9	5	0

In addition, a widow receives medical and educational benefits in respect of her children. If she had three children she would also receive child endowment to the extent of 15s. a week. Further, as a Class A widow she would be entitled to a special allowance of 5s. a week with respect to the first child who would not be eligible for child endowment. Thus, she would receive a total amount of £11 5s. a fortnight for herself and her three children. Nobody can say that the widow of an ex-serviceman with children has been in any way neglected by the Commonwealth Government.

The very Act from which the hon. member is quoting goes even further in providing for the widow of an ex-serviceman. If she is engaging in a business it provides for a loan up to £250. If the loan is for the purpose of enabling an eligible person to engage in or resume certain occupations a loan may be granted up to £1,000. Therefore, I think the widow of an ex-serviceman is pretty well looked after by the Commonwealth Act. If any of us think that the widow of an ex-serviceman should be better cared for, the right action would be to take the matter up with the responsible authorities, who would be the Government in whose service the husband lost his life.

**Mr. Kerr:** Following your ruling, there is no need for this Bill at all.

**Mr. HANLON:** That is not so. I do not regard a widow in the same light as a man who is able to work for his living. I have a definite objection to a woman's having to

work for her living. I think most hon. members here also have that objection. It is totally unnecessary to make a provision in any Act that could be interpreted as suggesting that a woman should go on the land and try to run a farm when she has young children and should be receiving the care of the nation.

**Mr. Sparkes:** She may have a son who is almost of age.

**Mr. HANLON:** The son is a free subject, and he could run the farm. He could obtain a loan from the Commonwealth Bank as an ordinary citizen to help him run the farm. If a widow had a son coming of age, I think it would be the son's job to run the farm and the widow's job to look after her children on the liberal pensions and allowances made available to her by the Commonwealth Government. If the case does arise in which a widow wants to cling to a place—

**Mr. Sparkes:** She would want to keep her farm.

**Mr. HANLON:** If that position does arise the Governor in Council has power to do that for her.

**Mr. Aikens:** Why not put it in the Bill?

**Mr. HANLON:** Because it may not be necessary to put it in. If we put it in we may be encouraging all the widows to try to get on the land to try to get rich. (Opposition laughter.) I believe that they should be looked after by the Federal Government. The hon. member for Aubigny laughs. He will shortly be in a position to assess accurately the value of the land he holds, and we shall see what he has to say about values then. That is by the way. Personally, I think that the widow and children of these men who fell fighting for their country should be looked after without having to go on the land at all, but if the case does arise in which a widow is in the circumstances suggested, the Governor in Council has power to meet it, and I am sure that no hon. member in this Committee would think that the Government would neglect the opportunity of doing everything they can for a widow in such circumstances.

**Mr. AIKENS (Mundingsburra) (5.2 p.m.):** The contribution by the Treasurer merely confirms the opinion that I have long held of him that no hon. member in this Chamber can be more cutting and biting in debate when he is on solid ground and no-one more feeble when his feet are on shifting sand.

We heard on the initiatory stages of the Bill, and again on the second reading, quite a good deal of flamboyant rhetoric when he said, "We are not going to wait for the Commonwealth Government. We are going to look after our own boys. We, the Queensland Government, are going to set the pace; let other Governments follow." Then the hon. member for Bowen moved his amendment and the hon. gentleman was reduced to the pitiable expedient of raising a legal quibble. Having succeeded on the legal

quibble he is now faced with the point-blank question, "Are you prepared to give the soldier's widow the same consideration as you would give to the soldier?" and we have from him the assurance that should such an occasion arise the Queensland Government will give the widow the same consideration as they give the soldier. Very well. If the Queensland Government are honest and sincere in that opinion, as expressed by the Treasurer, why not include it in the Bill? The hon. gentleman now attempts to shield himself behind the Commonwealth Government, which he so bitterly attacked on an earlier stage of the Bill, when he said, "The soldier went forth and fought for the Commonwealth Government," but let me remind him that the soldier went forth and fought for this Government as much as for the Commonwealth Government. We owe an obligation to the soldier and the soldier's widow just as much as the Commonwealth Government owe an obligation to the soldier and the soldier's widow. The arguments advanced by the Treasurer are puerile in the extreme.

The whole thing boils down to this: if the soldier's widow wants to be independent, if she wants to join in the general prosperity of this State, then this State should afford her the same opportunity of doing it as it affords the soldier. Apparently the hon. gentleman holds with the mid-Victorian idea that the zenith of a woman's ambition should be to be the domestic serf of a man, or perhaps to be installed in some menage to operate purely and simply as a human incubator. I do not believe in that view of woman's emancipation. I believe that woman, if she wants to stand up and fight for herself, should have equal opportunity with man. I believe in the complete emancipation of woman, and not in any half-baked theological theory of emancipation advanced by the Treasurer. The only way in which we can do that as regards a woman who is a widow is to afford her the same privilege and concessions in this Bill as are being afforded to the returned soldier himself.

I will not go over the arguments advanced by the hon. member for Bowen. While the Treasurer was speaking, the hon. member for Aubigny interjected that the son of the widow of a returned soldier might be coming of age and thus be able to take over the farm.

I believe that we should help the widow of the returned soldier over that period in order that she may keep within her family the farm her husband handed to her care. For all we know, it may be a farm that was handed down from father to son over several generations. In this very Chamber we have men who have descended from generations of farmers. It would be a terrible thing if that succession of farmers were to be cut off simply because this State Government did not believe in caring for the widow the same as they did for the soldier.

That is what this amendment means. Are we going to give to the widow the same concession as we give to the soldier? All the

legal quibbles and all the words of the Treasurer are of no avail. That is the solid fact that faces us and faces the people. I for one stand for giving to the widow of the returned soldier every concession available to the returned soldier himself.

**Mr. L. J. BARNES** (Cairns) (5.7 p.m.): I am inclined to support the amendment. On the Treasurer's own argument his objective seems to be £10 a fortnight for a widow and so many children and under this Bill an incapacitated serviceman getting £2 a week would not be refused. No, he would not be refused at all—he would have the privilege of exercising his rights under the Bill. God knows the rural widow has made and is making a great sacrifice. We know how such farms have gone back. I know of one instance in which a widow's overdraft has gone back over £800 during the war because she was not able to get man-power to work the farm. Her husband was in the fighting services and she had three children aged 12, nine and eight years. Unfortunately, up till now the dairy farmer has by prostituting the labour of his own sons and daughters been able to make a living. It is a known fact from the income-tax returns that the average income of the dairy farmer of Australia is £3 10s. a week. For that reason widows should be catered for in this Bill.

We are asked to assume that the Governor in Council may do something for her. Surely she is not to be put in the same class as someone from the British Empire whom the Governor in Council may include? Surely the widow is entitled to concessions that are available to incapacitated soldiers who may receive a pension of £2 10s. a week? Why limit a widow's income to £5 a week? Even if she gets free education for her children we ought to be only too pleased to put a number of them on the land if they desire. Good, honest women put up with the inconveniences of the land during the war and some of them now have had to break the sad news to the children that they have no daddy. If the amendment is not accepted, then it will be a lasting disgrace to the Government. It would be a disgrace to the Government, too, if the Governor in Council refused the benefit of this clause to a soldier's widow.

**Mr. NICKLIN** (Murrumba—Leader of the Opposition) (5.10 p.m.): We must consider the amendment and its effect. We do not want to be led astray by introducing into the debate any sob stuff. That is apart from the point we are considering.

We all think that our country should care for widows of returned soldiers properly.

The point in the amendment is: are we going to put in the Bill a clause that would give the opportunity to a widow of a deceased member of the forces to continue on the farm for the benefit perhaps of her children. After all, she may have a number of children in their teens who are quite capable of helping her to work the farm yet not old enough to accept the responsibility of a mortgage. In some cases perhaps the widow,

in association with her late husband, has put many years of work into the property, and she should have the opportunity of getting help under the Bill. I believe cases such as that are amply provided for under paragraph (b). For that reason I do not think the amendment is necessary. The Treasurer has told us that if it is made apparent that it would be advisable to assist widows of deceased members of the forces he can do it under paragraph (b).

**Mr. Aikens:** And refuse to do it; don't forget that.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I am not forgetting that either. I think the position is covered by that paragraph. If the Premier is prepared to put into effect the protestation he has made to the effect that he would do everything possible for widows and servicemen the position will be all right. I am sure if any widow made application for assistance—

**Mr. Hanlon:** Could you imagine any Government refusing in such a case?

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I do not think they would.

**Mr. Hanlon:** Daughters or sisters would be in the same position and if you tried to provide for everybody in the Bill you would need one from here to Woollongabba.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I think that paragraph covers it. Although I support the principle of the amendment moved by the hon. member for Bowen, I do not think it is necessary.

**Mr. PATERSON** (Bowen) (5.13 p.m.): The main argument used against the amendment consisted of two parts. The first is that paragraph (b) under which the Government can include any class of persons among those entitled to concessions, provides for widows; the second that the Commonwealth Government already provide for a pension for the widows of deceased soldiers. I agree that under an order in council the Government could grant this concession to widows of soldiers, and I am willing to accept the assurance of the Acting Premier that this Government would do it.

**Mr. Hanlon** interjected.

**Mr. PATERSON:** I am not suggesting that he is misleading the Committee or that he is dishonest; I am willing to accept his assurance. But there is no guarantee how long the Acting Premier will be Acting Premier or whether subsequently he will become Premier. I always prefer that Parliament itself should express itself on these matters rather than that it should be left to the Governor in Council to decide. While I realise that there are many details that we cannot expect Parliament to go into and it is therefore necessary that some things be left to the Governor in Council, subject ultimately to the overriding power of Parliament to reject any order or regulation, nevertheless I strongly favour Parliament's right to insert a specific provision wherever it can. Here it can. Here it can insert a specific provision, so if my amendment is carried it will not matter whether the Acting

Premier holds office in future or becomes Premier or not; it will not matter at all. We then should know as a matter of fact that the statute law of this State provides for the widow.

The second argument used is that already the Commonwealth Government provide a pension. I agree that under Commonwealth law a pension is provided, but I would point out that a pension to a widow is a kind of solatium and compensation to make up for the loss of the earning power of the husband had he lived. In other words, had the soldier been fortunate enough to come back he would have been able to work his farm and earn a certain amount of income, the amount being dependent on the circumstances. The pension is merely a compensation for what he might have been able to earn plus a certain amount of solatium, as it were, for the great loss the widow has suffered. But had the man come back alive he not only would have been able to earn whatever he was capable of earning, but he would be entitled to this concession under the Bill, freedom from interest for a period of three years. I am asking that the widow retain the pension, which is a certain amount of compensation for the loss of her husband's earnings, and be given the concession that her husband would have received had he remained alive.

I might, perhaps, illustrate my argument better if I took the case of an incapacitated soldier, one completely incapacitated. If such a man had a farm before he went to the war and returns completely incapacitated, he is entitled to his pension plus any concession this Bill confers on returned members of the forces. In other words, a living man who is completely incapacitated is entitled both to the pension and the concession. My amendment merely asks that the widow of a man who is dead—not living and completely incapacitated—shall be entitled to both pension and the concession.

Question—That the words proposed to be inserted in clause 4 (Mr. Paterson's amendment) be so inserted—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 10.

Mr. Barnes, L. J.	Mr. Plunkett
„ Clayton	„ Walker
„ Kerr	„
„ McIntyre	<i>Tellers:</i>
„ Morris	„ Aikens
„ Paterson	„ Wanstall

NOES, 35.

Mr. Bruce	Mr. Keyatta
„ Clark	„ Macdonald
„ Davis	„ Maher
„ Devries	„ Moore
„ Duggan	„ Müller
„ Dunstan	„ Nicklin
„ Edwards	„ O'Shea
„ Farrell	„ Power
„ Foley	„ Slessar
„ Gair	„ Smith
„ Gledson	„ Sparkes
„ Graham	„ Taylor
„ Gunn	„ Walsh
„ Hanlon	„ Williams
„ Hanson	„
„ Hayes	<i>Tellers:</i>
„ Healy	„ Ingram
„ Hilton	„ Turner
„ Jones	„

Resolved in the negative.

Clause 4, as read, agreed to.

Clause 5, Amendment of section 28; advances to dairy farmers, farmers, and sheep farmers, as read, agreed to.

Clause 6—New section 29 A.B.; Advances to companies to purchase machinery and plant for fodder production and pasture renovation—

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (5.24 p.m.): I move the following amendment:—

“On page 3, line 37, omit the word—  
‘two’  
and insert in lieu thereof the word—  
‘three.’”

The effect of this amendment is to increase the advances to co-operative associations from £2,000 to £3,000. I do not feel that this increase will create any undue hardship on anyone, but it will have the effect of being of some help to co-operative associations. We appreciate the Treasurer's thought in making provision along these lines, but we feel that £2,000 is not enough for the purpose. I was considering asking for an even greater increase, but the Treasurer has pointed out that not many co-operative associations have made application for aid in this direction.

I believe it will come. It is something that must come. The question of fodder conservation has to be tackled. I have heard it spoken about repeatedly in this Chamber and I believe that if it is tackled from this angle something practical can be done. I feel sure that something more than this will have to be done. Co-operative associations whose operations cover large areas, might want to do a good deal more. In view of the Treasurer's remarks, I am led to hope that he will accept this amendment.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Treasurer) (5.26 p.m.): I propose to agree to this amendment. The money that has been provided so far has not been used, but we wish to help the co-operative associations to get on with this work. The only objection is that we do not want to make available a huge amount of money that will not be used. If the amount was raised to £5,000, it might mean that it would never be used. If these associations will make use of the money the Government will be quite willing to make more available.

Amendment (Mr. Muller) agreed to.

Clause 6, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 7—Amendment of Schedule, New Clause 12A; Rate of Interest on advances made before 1 July 1943—

Mr. PATERSON (Bowen) (5.27 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

“On page 4, line 11, omit the word—  
‘four’  
and insert in lieu thereof the words—  
‘two and one half.’”

If that is carried I propose to move a consequential amendment on line 14.

Clause 7 sets out the rate of interest on loans from the Agricultural Bank. As it

stands it fixes the rate at 4 per cent., and my amendment proposes that the rate shall be  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. Quite candidly, I look forward to the day when interest payments will be non-existent, but I am moving my amendment now as a reasonable compromise under the existing system. It is not much good my getting up to move an amendment based on the existence of some system that does not exist. So I am proposing a rate that I suggest is reasonable even under the present circumstances.

I think everyone will agree that one of the greatest burdens all settlers have to carry is the interest burden. I agree that it is not the only burden they carry—they have to carry many other burdens—but the interest burden is a heavy one and it is the only one relevant to this discussion.

If a settler—and this applies to civilians as well as ex-servicemen—borrows £5,000 at 4 per cent., he is paying £200 a year in interest. I think every hon. member will agree that that is a considerable burden for him to carry, and no-one would suggest that he would have a very luxurious farm simply by borrowing £5,000 for its purchase. As I pointed out during my speech on the second reading, it may be said that the Government have to borrow the money to provide the funds for the Agricultural Bank. I do not know whether the Government have to borrow all the money. As far as I can make out, the Government provide some of the funds from Consolidated Revenue. However, whether they provide all from loan money or part from loan money and part from Consolidated Revenue, I am still putting forward my amendment. If they do obtain some from Consolidated Revenue, the economic argument against my amendment that the Government have to pay interest on loans and that the least we can expect is that they should be recuperated will lose much of its force.

Even if the Government have to obtain the whole of the funds for the Agricultural Bank by way of loans the interest rate is still too high. Even if the funds of the bank are raised by way of loans we must consider the settler not simply from the economic point of view but from the human point of view also. It is our duty to see that the interest rates do not impose too heavy a burden on the settler. So far as I can make out, some of the funds come from Consolidated Revenue, raised mainly from taxation, and that being so there is no interest rate to be paid by the Government. If it is true that the Treasury may lend some money from Consolidated Revenue to the bank and charge the bank interest, I am suggesting that the Treasury should not charge the bank any interest. If the Treasury takes the money from Consolidated Revenue, which is raised by taxation, and if we want proper settlement of the land, the money should be handed over to the bank as a grant to enable this State to develop its agricultural settlement and no interest should be paid by the bank to the Treasury. I do not know whether that is the position, but if it is that is my reply to it.

A rate of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., after all, is not a low rate, but it is the amount that the citizens

of the Commonwealth receive from war loans over a period of five years. If the loans are for longer periods the interest rate is higher, I think  $3\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. I am suggesting that if it is good enough for the public to subscribe to war loans for a period of five years at  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. it is not too much to ask the Agricultural Bank to lend money to settlers at  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. The settler after all is doing valuable work in the State and it is to the advantage of the State that rural settlement should be encouraged within the limits of marketing potentialities, and within those limits the State should encourage rural settlement and rural development. I am submitting that my amendment will encourage rural settlement much more effectively than if the money was lent at 4 per cent.

It may seem to some that a reduction from 4 per cent. to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. is a big one in these days, but when we look back we shall agree that the opinions of many persons have changed in regard to interest rates. At one time I understand this State raised funds in the United States of America at 7 per cent. It may have been that the State could not get cheaper money anywhere else at the time, but whether it could or not, and whether it had to take the money under duress or not, I think all hon. members will agree that 7 per cent. was an exorbitant rate. Nevertheless that was the rate charged. Then interest rates on loan money gradually came down and today the rate the State pays has reached a point people many years ago would have thought was absurdly low. Our ideas change with regard to interest rates and I venture to say that if future generations have any complaint to make about my amendment it will be that I did not ask for a still lower rate. As I said before, I look forward to the day when interest will be completely non-existent. But I am putting forward my amendment as a reasonable compromise in existing circumstances.

**The CHAIRMAN:** As a concession in interest rates would make a charge on Consolidated Revenue I am of the opinion that the amendment imposes a liability on the Crown not covered by the message and I therefore rule it out of order.

Clause 7, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 8 to 14, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment.

The House adjourned at 5.38 p.m.