

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**FRIDAY, 26 OCTOBER 1945**

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## FRIDAY, 26 OCTOBER, 1945.

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

### ASSENT TO BILLS.

Assent to the following Bills proposed by Mr. Speaker:—

Gift Duty Act Amendment Bill.

Co-ordination of Rural Advances and Agricultural Bank Acts and other Acts Amendment Bill.

### QUESTIONS.

#### RAILWAY COAL SUPPLIES AND PRICES.

Mr. PATERSON (Bowen) asked the Minister for Transport—

“1. What price per ton does the Railway Department pay for coal from (a) the State coalmine at Collinsville; (b) the State coalmine at Ogmore; (c) the coalmines in the Maryborough district; (d) the coalmines in the Ipswich district; (e) the coalmines in the Darling Downs district?”

“2. Has the department conducted tests to determine the value as a fuel for locomotives of the coal supplied from the mines referred to in Question (1), and, if so, when and what were the results of such tests?”

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

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Mirani), replied—

	Per ton.
“1. (a) State Coal Mine,	
Collinsville—	<i>s. d.</i>
Screened ..	24 8 less 5 per cent.
Unscreened..	20 11 less 5 per cent.
(b) State Coal Mine,	
Ogmore—	
“Run of Mine”	26 9
(c) Maryborough Dis-	
trict—	
To Maryborough	
and Bundaberg	
Depots ..	33 9
To Gympie	28 7½
(d) Ipswich District—	
Bundamba and	
Redbank Area	
1st Grade	22 0
2nd Grade	21 6
Rosewood Area—	22 10
Lanefield ..	24 4
Lanefield	
Extended	26 0
(e) Darling Downs—	
Warwick Area	28 9
Maranoa Area	24 0
Oakey Area	28 6

Colliery.		Date Last Boiler Test.	Taking Standard Value as 100, the Values of Coal as Fuels for Locomotives were as Under.
State Coal Mine, Collinsville ..	Mine,	27-5-42	115
State Coal Mine, Styx River, Ogmore ..	Mine,	25-6-30	102

## MARYBOROUGH DISTRICT.

Victory, Torbanlea ..	1-10-42	123
Portland, Torbanlea ..	7-3-40	118
Jubilee, Torbanlea ..	11-7-40	112
Burgowan No. 7, Torbanlea ..	23-7-40	111
Burgowan No. 10, Torbanlea ..	26-3-42	123
Ellangowan, Torbanlea ..	26-8-41	119
Burrun East, Torbanlea ..	27-3-41	126

## IPSWICH DISTRICT.

Aberdare Extended No. 1 ..	10-6-43	126
Aberdare No. 6 ..	23-4-32	115
Aberdare No. 7 ..	17-6-43	100
New Aberdare East ..	4-9-41	96
Boxflat Extended (Mixed) ..	5-3-42	108
Boxflat No. 3 (Mixed) ..		
New Whitwood ..	13-11-42	100
Amberley ..	3-6-42	95
Blackheath ..	30-4-42	112
Bonnie Dundee ..	20-11-42	102
New Ebbw Vale ..	16-1-42	100
United No. 5 ..	30-8-40	82

(Temporary order placed owing to shortage in supply and accepted at second grade rate)

New Chum No. 3 ..	29-4-42	103
United No. 7 ..	16-7-42	101
United No. 8 ..	(Nct tested)	(Temporary order placed)
Glencoe ..	9-7-42	106
Oakleigh ..	2-2-40	101
Roughrigg ..	30-10-42	104
Malabar ..	25-6-42	100
Normanton ..	13-2-42	106
Rosewood ..	20-2-42	112
Rosemount ..	30-10-41	112
Westfalen ..	26-2-42	106
New Hope ..	28-5-43	114
Clarefield ..	12-2-42	114
Moorefield ..	13-2-41	117
Lowfield No. 2 ..	22-7-43	100
Lowfield No. 1 ..	15-7-43	99
Westvale ..	11-6-43	96
Lanefield ..	29-10-42	118
Lanefield Extended ..	6-3-42	108
Smithfield ..	(Not tested)	(Temporary order placed)

## DARLING DOWNS DISTRICT.

Tannymorel No. 9 ..	19-11-42	102
Maranoa ..	7-8-41	111
Acland ..	6-11-42	105
Sugarloaf ..	27-2-41	107
Willeroo No. 2 ..	21-8-41	114
Balgowan No. 2 ..	5-11-42	108
Balgowan No. 1 ..	20-3-41	110"

## RISE IN COST OF DWELLINGS.

**Mr. PATERSON** (Bowen): I desire to ask the Secretary for Public Works whether he has an answer to the following question, which I addressed to him on 24 October:—

"1. What is the present average cost, as estimated by the State Advances Corporation, of a dwelling-house constructed of (a) brick, and (b) timber, with a floor space of approximately 1,000 sq. ft. and a roof of (i.) fibrolite, (ii.) tiles, and (iii.) galvanised iron, respectively?"

"2. What was the average cost, as estimated by the State Advances Corporation, of dwelling-houses of the same size and types in 1938 and 1939?"

"3. What is the present average cost, and what was the average cost in 1938 and

1939, as estimated by the State Advances Corporation, of (a) building materials used, (b) sub-contractors' charges, (c) wages of the building trades workers engaged, and (d) other building charges, for each of the above types of dwelling-houses?"

**Hon. H. A. BRUCE** (The Tableland) replied—

"1. 1945—

	Timber.
	£
(i.) Asbestos cement roof ..	900
(ii.) Tiled roof ..	941
(iii.) Galvanised iron roof ..	870

"In the cost of £870 above this figure is approximate only, as galvanised iron has not been used since 1939.

"So far as brick dwelling-houses are concerned, only one contract has been let for the erection of brick houses since the resumption of home building. This was a special case of a group of 32 brick houses. Each house contains an area of 1,030 square feet at a total contract price of £30,856, plus any extras at schedule rates to cover items, the exact quantities of which could not be determined when the contract was let. Estimated on the basis of 1,000 square feet, the average cost would be £942, plus any approved extras.

"2. 1938-39—

	Brick.	Timber.
	£	£
(i.) Asbestos cement roof ..	765	557
(ii.) Tiled roof ..	780	575
(iii.) Galvanised iron roof ..	748	540

"3. (a) Since 1938-39 increases in prices for timber and other building materials are responsible for an increase of 5 per cent. in the cost of an average house. (b) Sub-contractors' prices have risen as follows:—

	Per cent.
House blocks (concrete) ..	75
External painting ..	181
Internal painting ..	80
Electrical installations ..	60 to 100
Fibrous plaster ceilings ..	50
Fibrous plaster walls ..	69
Drainage ..	100
Plumbing ..	33

(c) Wages have risen since 1 December, 1938, as under:—

	Per cent.
Tradesmen ..	17½
Building labourers ..	23½

## HOUSING SHORTAGE.

**Mr. POWER** (Baroona), without notice, asked the Secretary for Public Works—

"Has the Minister for Public Works read an article in the 'Courier-Mail' this morning suggesting—

1. That sites within 10 miles of the city could be selected on which groups of 500 houses could be built; and

2. That politicians favoured day labour and the public favoured contract."

**Hon. H. A. BRUCE** (The Tableland) replied—

"I have read the article.

1. The State Advances Corporation recently called tenders for 118 houses in Brisbane and only received tenders for five.

The State Advances Corporation must give consideration to the question of fares which workers would have to pay if homes were built, as suggested by Mr. McDonald, within 10 miles of the city.

2. The politicians, through the State Advances Corporation, could continue their policy, but there is nothing to stop the Master Builders' Association from carrying out Mr. McDonald's proposal, viz., that sites within 10 miles of the city could be selected on which groups of at least 500 houses could be built, provided these houses were built at a reasonable price and made available to people without homes."

#### PAPERS.

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Regulation under the Banana Industry Protection Acts, 1929 to 1937 (18 October, 1945).

Report of the Brisbane Milk Board for the year 1944-1945.

Report of the Auditor-General on the Books and Accounts of the Brisbane Milk Board for the year 1944-1945.

#### FIREARMS LICENSE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

##### INITIATION.

**Hon. T. A. FOLEY** (Normanby—Secretary for Health and Home Affairs): I move—

"That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Firearms License Act of 1927 in certain particulars, and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

#### OFFICIALS IN PARLIAMENT ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

##### INITIATION.

**Hon. E. M. HANLON** (Ithaca—Acting Premier): I move—

"That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Officials in Parliament Acts, 1896 to 1944, in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

#### BRANDS ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

##### INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

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

**Hon. T. L. WILLIAMS** (Port Curtis—Secretary for Agriculture and Stock) (11.13 a.m.): I move—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Brands Acts, 1915 to 1941, in a certain particular."

This is one of those simple amending Bills of a truly rural character which in passage of time become necessary. The amendment seeks to provide for an increase in the maximum size of symbol brands from 2½ inches to 3 inches. It might be interesting to hon. members if I point out that prior to 1932 no maximum whatever was fixed for symbol brands. In 1932 the maximum for all brands on young cattle was fixed at 3½ inches, with a maximum size for full-grown cattle of 5 inches. Later, in 1937, on the representation of the tanners, the maximum for all brands, including symbol brands, was fixed at 2½ inches. The maximum for three-piece brands will not be increased by the proposed amending Bill, but it will affect the symbol brand, which is being increased by half an inch, namely, from 2½ inches to 3 inches. This amendment is urgently sought chiefly by the United Graziers' Association. The majority of the holders of symbol brands are selectors and stock-owners. Altogether there are about 2,013 of these symbol brands. They were first registered in 1910, the registration fee being fixed at £7 10s. annually.

**Mr. SPARKES** (Aubigny) (11.16 a.m.): I commend the Government for bringing down this Bill to alter the symbol brands. As the Minister knows, everyone who has a symbol brand has also a three-piece brand. A number of people use the symbol brand in preference to their three-piece brand. The symbol is usually one letter, a numeral or a symbol. By and large, it is much smaller than any three-piece brand, which comprises two letters or a heart or spade and a number. Although it is to be increased by half an inch, the symbol brand will still be considerably smaller than the ordinary three-piece brand. The symbol brand of two and a-half inches was altogether too small for cattle on big runs. If a beast is branded at 10 or 12 months old, which is common on the bigger runs, it is a very small brand indeed when the beast grows into a bullock and for that reason I commend the hon. gentleman for bringing down this amendment.

It will be recalled that when the Act was amended on a previous occasion by reducing the size to 2½ inches I suggested to the then Minister, Mr. Bulcock, that symbol brands should be exempt. My suggestion was not accepted but I am glad to see that the Government have seen their error. That was another instance in which they disregarded the advice of men who had practical knowledge of using these brands in the paddock. There was

no sinister motive behind the suggestion I made. Even now I think 3 inches is small enough for a symbol brand. My brand, for instance, is an "S." If that was increased to twice its size it would still be smaller than a three-piece brand.

**Mr. Williams:** But some of them are intricate, and cannot be allowed to be too small.

**Mr. SPARKES:** That is the point. Some of the symbol brands are very intricate and if they are made too small they close up and look like a blotch. If they are badly put on they certainly do blotch. With the three-piece brands the characters are well apart. I saw what I think was an anchor symbol brand on a beast the other day and I defy anyone to tell what it was. It looked just like a blur on the beast.

In Queensland we have what is known as the dot after the symbol brand. I think the idea of that was to distinguish the Queensland from the New South Wales symbol brand.

In my opinion, that dot is a useless addition to the symbol brand. The Minister will probably tell us that it is placed there to distinguish a Queensland brand from a New South Wales brand. For instance, if there is a brand "S" in New South Wales, a similar brand in Queensland requires a dot after it. However, that dot is so small and so hard to detect that it is of very little use. As far as I know, there is no law in New South Wales to stop a man from having a brand "1UM" if he so desires, although that is a well-known Queensland brand. If it is necessary to put a dot after the angle "S" brand that I have or any other symbol brand, why is it not necessary to put a dot after "1UM"? I ask the Minister to look into that matter with a view to removing the use of that dot. It is altogether unnecessary and merely causes a further blotch on the hide of the beast. I believe that if the Minister looks into it, he will find that it is only red tape that has kept the dot in use for so long.

I again commend the Minister for bringing in this amendment to the Brands Act. It will fill a long-felt want among users of symbol brands in Queensland.

**Mr. PLUNKETT (Albert) (11.22 a.m.):** There are many reasons why symbol brands should be enlarged, because in a symbol brand you have only one identifying mark to look for and it is often very difficult to decipher. In the case of a three-piece brand, if you can decipher two of the letters you have a pretty good idea whose brand it is, especially if the beast is in the district in which it is used. The symbol brand is a big advantage to those people who are willing to pay the extra price. It is essential for people who deal in cattle. In crush-branding of stock it is much easier to brand with a symbol brand, and it stands to reason that where only one brand is used it is just as well to have it of a size that can be deciphered.

With regard to the point raised about the dot after the brand, to my way of thinking the use of the dot is an advantage. Many beasts are not plainly branded, and in trying to decipher the brand the first thing you find out is whether it is a three-piece brand or a symbol brand. Frequently you can find the dot but not the rest of the symbol, but you know nevertheless that it is a symbol brand. Therefore, it is an advantage in that way.

In 1941 the point was raised that the brands were so big that they were spoiling the hides and reducing their value. For that reason we tried to decrease the size of brands. I go so far as to say that the symbol brands should be even larger than the three-piece brands as symbol brands have only the one letter or symbol and are harder to decipher than the three-piece brands. I do not think there is much in the contention that brands depreciate the value of the hides, seeing that they are seriously affected by ticks. In the case of Queensland hides it does not matter whether the cattle were infested with ticks or not because Queensland hides are considered to have a lower value than the hides from other States where they have no ticks. The enlargement of the symbol brand is essential, especially for those people who have to brand grown stock that they buy from time to time. The enlargement is a good idea, it will give service to the cattleman and make it easier for the brand to be deciphered.

Motion (Mr. Williams) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

#### FIRST READING.

Bill presented and, on motion of Mr. Williams, read a first time.

#### WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT ACQUISITION BILL.

#### SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Debate resumed from 24 October (see p. 1069) on Mr. Jones's motion—

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

**Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba—Leader of the Opposition) (11.29 a.m.):** Naturally any legislation dealing with soldier settlement attracts a great deal of public attention at the present time and it is important in dealing with it that we should profit from the mistakes that were made in soldier settlements after the last war. If we look at those mistakes and profit by them when passing a Bill to deal with soldier settlement now it will be to our advantage and will help us to achieve our object, which is successful soldier settlement with a minimum of failures.

This problem of settling soldiers on the land is being tackled in three ways. First we have legislation to enable a soldier who has some capital to buy his own farm; secondly, we have this Bill, to give the State authority to acquire land necessary for soldier settlement; and thirdly we are to have a Bill setting out the general principles

of soldier settlement. The measure now before us is the second of these Bills and in considering it we must realise that in this State we have not on this occasion the same amount of Crown lands available for soldier settlement as we had after the last war. Consequently, if we are going to establish soldier settlement we have to look to land already occupied. That means that the State has to have power to acquire that land.

Our legislation must necessarily be complementary to the legislation passed by the Commonwealth Government. It is a pity, I repeat, that the Commonwealth Government took such a long time to put into effect their legislation dealing with the re-establishment of our servicemen. The delay has certainly handicapped the States and has held back their proposals for soldier settlement within their borders. I must congratulate the Minister on introducing his legislation so quickly after the passage of the Commonwealth legislation. It shows that the State is willing, even eager, to get on with this important job of soldier settlement. After all, even when this legislation dealing with the acquisition of land is on the statute book it will take some little time to acquire these lands, some little time to allocate and examine them, and some little time to make them available to soldier settlers. So it is essential that we should have this legislation put into effect as quickly as possible in order that the scheme can be set in motion and the many hundreds of men who are waiting may have the opportunity of getting on the land. Section 101 of the Commonwealth legislation enables a State to acquire land for the settlement of discharged members of the forces. It also enables the State to develop or improve land for settlement by discharged members of the forces, to settle discharged members of the forces on land so acquired, developed or improved, and to carry out such other purposes relating to the settlement of discharged members of the forces on land as are prescribed.

The Minister has put into effect State legislation to enable the State to acquire the necessary lands. Now that we are tackling this problem of land settlement for soldiers we must realise that there are three kinds of soldier settlement. Firstly, there is that form of settlement which I mentioned previously, where an intending soldier settler has a certain amount of capital which he is prepared to invest. We should assist that man, and we have assisted him by the legislation we passed just recently amending the Agricultural Bank Act. Under that legislation we give to that settler certain concessions which will enable him to find a farm and purchase it by assistance under that Act, and to proceed to settle himself on the land. Then we have the second kind of settlement, that is settlement on land acquired for that purpose. That is the kind of settlement we are dealing with today. Thirdly, we have the settlement of soldiers on Crown leases, particularly pastoral lease resumptions and grazing selections. The Government have already announced their policy in this

respect. They have stated that they are going to give a measure of preference, and a good measure of preference to settle soldiers on portions of grazing leases that may be falling due.

Fifty per cent. of the lands are to be reserved for soldiers exclusively and they will have the opportunity to ballot for the other 50 per cent. also.

In considering this question of the acquisition of land we have to take into consideration certain definite general principles that must guide us in land settlement, principles that are necessary also to the success of soldier settlement. In acquiring any land, the first principle—and the main one, I think—is that the land we are to acquire can be used for profitable production. By “profitable production” I mean that there should be a reasonable chance of the settler’s producing the product for which the land is suitable and a reasonable chance of his obtaining a sustained payable market for it. We should not go in for any new type of produce for which there is a problematical market. I think if we keep that principle in mind in dealing with this question of soldier settlement we shall have complied with one of the first requirements for success.

The second requirement is to ensure that the land we acquire is made available in living areas. There is more in this question of a living area than just saying that each soldier shall have a certain number of acres. We had an excellent example of how inadequate that rule could work out to the detriment of the soldier with some of the soldier settlements of the last war, when we took a block of land and divided it up like a draught board into 20-acre blocks and put a soldier on each, irrespective of the quality of the land. That was one of the main reasons for the failure of Beerburrun; a number of soldiers got 15 or 16 acres of useless swamp in their 20 acres. In conjunction with the area required for a particular type of farm we should take into account also the topography of the country and the general physical characteristics of the land. In the subdivision of these acquired lands, therefore, we should see, if it is a farm intended for mixed farming, that it contains a fair proportion of land suitable for cultivation. The need for that is evident to all practical men. We had an example quoted during the debate on the Estimates of the Department of Health and Home Affairs when the Minister told us that as the Cherbourg aboriginal settlement was originally designed there was only about 30 acres of land suitable for cultivation, and it was necessary to buy another property alongside in order to give that settlement a suitable area of cultivable land.

**Mr. Jones:** Aerial surveys have already been made of several of these potential soldier-settlement areas.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I am glad to hear that. I was going to touch on that point—that surveys of all descriptions should be made of the areas to be acquired. The aerial survey is the logical start because it gives you

a general picture of the land to be acquired. Following it there should be surveys by land parties. And there is also the important question of soil surveys of these areas. I think we in Queensland up to the present time have not paid sufficient attention to the question of soil survey.

It is essential in this question of soldier settlement that we do not forget that important requirement. If in dealing with this question of a living area we take into consideration these two matters, i.e., topography, and the general physical characteristics of the land, we shall eliminate some of the mistakes that occurred after the last war.

On this occasion we must pay a great deal of attention to the location of the lands that may be required, for this reason: it would handicap soldier settlers if the selected blocks were away from the usual social amenities we like to see in our country districts. This is more important today than it was after the last war. This time most of our soldiers have been in the armed forces for long periods and their civilian life has been more disturbed than it was during the last war. On this occasion a great number of the boys going onto soldier settlements will be in a disturbed mental condition and it will handicap them very greatly if they are placed away from the social amenities and contact with surrounding people. I know that that is one of the greatest troubles that we are likely to strike in soldier settlements. I have met with it already. Many boys, good types of lads who have been used to life on the land, now find they crave for the contact with their mates that they enjoyed when in the armed forces for a long period. If these young men are to be put out in a district by themselves, even though they may have their families with them, they will find it difficult to settle down.

**Mr. Jones:** In order to do that you have to acquire land in the closer-settled areas.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** Yes. That is an important factor.

**Mr. Sparkes:** It will be difficult.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** It will be difficult but it is an aspect that must not be overlooked.

**Mr. Jones:** It is very important.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** If we overlook it we shall increase the percentage of failures. I have had personal experience of boys back from this war and I find it takes at least 12 months before they get over the feeling of missing the close contact they had with their comrades in the services.

**Mr. Williams:** It is only natural, too.

**Mr. NICKLIN.** It is natural.

Another requirement for success, and a particularly important one in regard to this acquired land, is the capital value of the blocks that will be available. Naturally, the land we hope to acquire, i.e., land in more or less closely-settled areas, will be land of high capital value and we must not overlook the fact that if that land is parcelled out to

returned soldiers at possibly the high capital value at which it will be acquired we shall start off these soldiers over-capitalised.

**Mr. Hilton:** There is provision in the Commonwealth Act for that.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I will come to that. If we do not take into account the provision in the Commonwealth Act, that irrespective of the cost of the land acquired a fair economic capital value shall be set on the blocks before allocation to the soldiers, we shall have difficulties in regard to capitalisation.

**Mr. Jones:** That is the basis of the Commonwealth-States agreement on soldier settlement.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** And it is a good basis because it would be better to take all reasonable precautions to ensure the success of the settler than to have a repetition of the tragic failures of the past and the writing off of amounts when it is too late to save the settlers. It is better to give them a reasonable chance at the start than to set them off with over-capitalised properties and perhaps be compelled to write off amounts after they have broken their hearts with hard work.

I come now to the question of subdivision of acquired lands. It should be definitely established that we should not just acquire land from one settler and take him off to put another settler on. If we do that we shall not be doing any real good and we shall not do what we are endeavouring to do with respect to soldier settlement. We should be simply disturbing one man to put another in his place.

I do not wish to be misunderstood. If a man has a greater area than is considered to be a fair living area in the locality, then make use of his surplus but leave him on a fair living area. If it is just a matter of acquiring one block and taking off a man who is making a success of his undertaking and putting another settler on, we shall not achieve anything at all.

**Mr. Jones:** There is no intention of doing that.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I am glad to have that assurance. I did not think the Minister had that intention. I mention the matter because it is an important point on this question of the subdivision of acquired lands.

I take it that when these lands are acquired they will all go into a common pool to be reallocated to soldiers who may be requiring land.

**Mr. Jones:** That is so.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I think there are instances in which there could be a variation of that principle. As an example, a man may have more than a living area. The excess land may be acquired and perhaps split up into two additional blocks. The original holder may have a couple of soldier sons who want land and who wish to live in that area. In such a case I think the soldier sons

should have preference in the allocation of that land. Perhaps that could be arranged under the provision of the Bill that gives the Minister power to make arrangements with landholders. I take it that in a case like that the Minister would give very favourable consideration to making an arrangement with the landholder for giving the extra lands to his sons.

**Mr. Jones:** We have already taken action in some of the frozen areas to enable sons of a grazier to acquire portions of the holding. That was not under this scheme, but we have done that.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I take it that principle could be applied to this scheme of acquisition also. There may be difficulties attaching to it but it is well worth considering.

I think it is worthy of consideration also that in allotting land in a particular area a measure of preference should be given to men from that area. For example, I do not think it would be an advantage to put men who are used to sugar farming into mixed farming, and vice versa.

**Mr. Jones:** I think one of our biggest difficulties is that 60 per cent. of our applicants will be men from the other States.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** That may be so. However, I think the same principle would apply. A measure of preference should, first of all, be given to men from the district in which the land is, because they will know the type of farming and the type of land there. Of course, this matter may be slightly outside the scope of the Bill and could be better brought up in the complementary legislation that will come forward later. However, I mention it in passing because it has an important bearing on the acquisition of land.

Now we come to the matter of acquisition. In this connection the Minister has his own officers at his disposal to report to him on land that may be suitable. He also has a departmental committee, known as the Soldier Settlement Advisory Committee, whose job it is to deal with soldier settlement. At present, this committee is purely a departmental one. It has on it no representatives from any of the major industries in this State or from any outside body at all, although I understand from the answer I received to a question I asked the Minister that it is the intention later to increase the personnel of that committee. I think that should be done as quickly as possible. In conjunction with the increase in the personnel and the representation on the Soldier Settlement Advisory Committee, I think it would be advisable to set up throughout the State a system of local committees, which would collate information regarding the areas available in their districts and submit that information to the central committee so that it may sift it out and advise the Minister.

**Mr. Jones:** The returned soldiers' organisations throughout the State are doing that now.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I know that. I know they are taking an interest in this matter. The fact that these returned soldiers' organisations are at present supplying information to the Minister through his advisory committee strengthens my argument that a system of local committees should be set up throughout the State for the purpose of collating this information and advising the Minister.

In addition to advising the Minister as to the availability of land to be acquired, these local committees could give practical advice to soldiers who may intend settling in their areas. In particular, they could give these intending settlers advice about the farms they intended to buy. Many soldiers—not many of them so far, I am glad to say—have bought properties that they would never have bought had they received a little local advice. This is very important. If every soldier settler knew he could approach some competent local body to advise him as to the possibilities and the value of the property he intended buying it would help him quite a lot.

**Mr. Devries:** Then from what you say some of them have been exploited?

**Mr. NICKLIN:** Some certainly have been but as I explained in another debate this session a great deal of the exploitation arises from the fact that only a loose control has been exercised over land values by the Commonwealth Sub-Treasury, with the result that some of the properties have had inflated values applied to them.

**Mr. Pie:** You would have group committees over big areas?

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I would not have a local committee every few yards but I would have area sub-committees. Before we can acquire land we must know first of all where such land can be obtained and I am suggesting to the Minister that these local committees could supply him with that information.

**Mr. Devries:** These committees would consist of practical farmers?

**Mr. NICKLIN:** Yes. In New Zealand, where repatriation and rehabilitation are miles ahead of what we have done in Australia, there were up to January of this year 30 district rehabilitation centres, 21 sub-centres and 110 local committees to advise the central committee of the New Zealand Government in connection with land settlement. I suggest that the Minister give the matter consideration when he is extending the representation on the Soldier Settlement Advisory Committee that is helping him at the present time.

**Mr. Jones:** We do get advice from the local branches of the returned soldiers' organisation. I think that you can overdo this committee idea somewhat.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** There may be some danger in it but it is a matter that can be kept well under control. There are some sub-branches of the League and other soldier organisations that at present are not aware that they may make these representations to

the Land Settlement Advisory Committee, which is, as I have explained, a purely departmental committee. The representation on it should be extended if it is to be of the best value for the future of returned soldier settlement in this State.

There is another phase of the acquisition of the land to which I should like to refer. When the land is acquired it goes into a pool and becomes Crown land. It is proposed to acquire all forms of tenure—freehold, leasehold, perpetual leasehold and others—under the existing law of the State. All that land will go into a common pool as Crown land, irrespective of tenure. I want to know what the intentions of the Government are on the reallocation of the land. For instance, is it proposed that freehold land should be continued on a freehold basis or is it proposed to reallocate freehold land as perpetual leasehold or convert it to some other tenure? Some of the area that it is proposed to acquire is held as freehold and I should like some intimation from the Minister as to the Government's intentions concerning the reallocation of the land and tenures involved.

Do they propose to allow those tenures to remain as they are when they are acquired or do they propose to make a common tenure of perpetual leasehold or some other form of leasehold?

**Mr. Hilton:** Which would be the most desirable?

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I suggested the soldier be given the option to take either freehold or perpetual leasehold.

**Mr. Jones:** The annual conference of returned soldiers in Sydney some time ago carried a resolution in favour of having all land set aside for soldier settlement on the leasehold basis.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** That may be their opinion but I hold the opinion that the intending settler should be allowed a measure of choice. If he wants freehold give him freehold, and if he wants perpetual leasehold give him leasehold. Perhaps the returned soldiers' conference in Sydney was not au fait with the question of leasehold as against freehold.

**Mr. Jones:** That is a matter to be dealt with in another Bill.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I thank the hon. gentleman for that explanation. I made that suggestion because the matter is very important.

Another question for consideration is the procedure to be followed in acquiring land. When it is decided that a certain area contains land suitable for acquisition a blanket is put over that area, meaning that all land transactions within it are held up. I am not objecting to that, because that is naturally an essential precedent to acquiring land. What I should like to emphasise is that there should be no undue delay on the part of the department in making up its mind what blocks it intends to acquire and what blocks it intends to leave as they are. It is certainly to the detriment of settlers in those areas to

have this blanket imposed on them for an unnecessarily long period. I hope that after the passage of this Bill every endeavour will be made by the hon. gentleman to make up his mind quick and lively as to the blocks of land that are required and remove restrictions on the land that is not required.

**Mr. Jones:** If you do not talk too long over there it will save a few hours anyhow.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I think we can exercise our right to say what we like about this Bill. After all, it is a particularly important one and we should not allow it to slip through this Chamber without examining it very fully indeed. However, I know the Minister did not mean that remark seriously.

**Mr. Devries:** He means you may be happy after you have seen the Bill.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** We have seen the Bill.

Up to the present I have been dealing more or less with the general principles of the Bill. I want to conclude my remarks by examining the particular principles contained in it. The Bill, after all, modifies the provisions of the Public Works Land Resumption Act of 1906 which deals with resumption of freehold and Part VI. of the Land Act, which deals with resumption of leasehold land. I have no objection to the principles incorporated in this Bill. I think they are, generally speaking, very good indeed and are designed mainly to speed up the provisions of those Acts, by amending them. After all, that is very important, for speed is very necessary in dealing with land acquisitions at the present time. The Land Act contains provisions that may hold acquisition up not for a few months but for a period that may run into years. This Bill modifies the procedure and introduces speed-up provisions that will be generally acceptable and are necessary for the matter we are dealing with.

In regard to the freehold, the modifications of the law are only in respect of procedure. They expedite acquisition but do not appear to infringe the rights of the owners in regard to compensation, except in one particular that requires a little bit of consideration, with which I will deal later. In addition to modifying the procedure, it contains a provision for taking land by agreement. That is, the Minister with the approval of the Governor in Council may acquire land by arrangement with the landholder. That is a common-sense provision because quite a number of people in this State are quite willing to allow their lands to be acquired by the Minister by arrangement with suitable compensation. That provision is an essential one because the Governor in Council will be able to approve of any arrangement the Minister makes with a landholder in regard to any land.

In regard to Crown leaseholds, the ordinary procedure is followed, with the exception, as the Minister pointed out, that one year is added to the balance of the term of the lease up to 10 years. That extra year will

compensate the leaseholder for the earlier disturbance he suffers by reason of the speedier resumption.

Now we come to the question of compensation. This is, I suppose, the only controversial provision in the Bill. The first thing that comes to mind is the determination of the date on which values shall be arrived at. The Rural Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Committee in its report recommended that a date in 1939 should be fixed as the base date for the fixation of resumption values. The Minister was wise in disregarding that recommendation and making the base date February 1942, the date on which the Commonwealth Government pegged land values throughout the Commonwealth. I think that is a fair base date.

**Mr. Jones:** That was agreed to at the Premiers' Conference.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** It is a fair base date because for a number of years up to 1939 there had been a gradual increase in the value of land, and there was an increase from 1939 to 1942; so by fixing the base date as February 1942, the date on which all land values were pegged, we shall give the landowners whose lands are to be acquired fair values. One principle has been recognised in connection with leaseholders that has not been recognised in respect of freeholders. We give a basis of compensation to the disturbed leaseholder but we give no compensation to the disturbed freeholder for the disturbance he is subject to by having the land taken away from him. I think if we recognise the principle in connection with leaseholders we should also recognise it in respect of freeholders also.

**Mr. Jones:** We are applying the principle already laid down in the Public Works Land Resumption Acts as to period—the general principle that applies under that Act.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I do not think the Public Works Land Resumption Act takes into account any claims on account of disturbance.

**Mr. Jones:** That is a matter for the Land Court.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I think the Land Court could and it would then be a fair basis. Some similar provision should have been included in this Bill in respect of landholders, a recognition that the landholder has some basis of claim for disturbance. At the present time, he has a very real case, because land values are high and if a man is disturbed in the possession of his property he naturally wants to acquire another property. If he seeks to obtain another property at the present levels of value, he will find it mighty difficult to get a similar property at the price for which the land may be acquired.

**Mr. Jones:** The question of disturbance is definitely dealt with in the Public Works Land Resumption Act.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** The Land Court can take it into consideration, and I hope that it will be taken into consideration. Compensation

for disturbance is a particularly important matter at the present time. It has come under my notice that a man recently sold a property at a good price. He wished to buy another property, but found he was much worse off, because he could not get a property approaching in value the property he sold for the price he received for it. That is general at present in buying land, and that being so, I think the disturbed freeholder is entitled to something for disturbance. The Bill recognises that principle in the case of the leaseholder.

**Mr. Hilton:** We are not going to disturb existing holders by reason of resuming some of their property and running them off.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I know that will not be the case in every instance, but there will be some properties, as the hon. member for Carnarvon will know, where it will be impossible to resume portion and leave the undisturbed portion with a fair living area, taking into consideration the topography of the property. For example, the area resumed may be 6,000 or 7,000 acres and it is to be split in half. The whole of the good cultivable land may be in the one half, and it may not be possible to subdivide the area in a way that both halves have a share of the cultivable land.

**Mr. Hilton:** They would leave a property like that alone if it was impossible to subdivide it on a reasonable basis.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I hope they will. All the same, this question of compensation for disturbance is an important one and must be taken into consideration.

**Mr. Jones:** Compensation would be based on the 1942 prices.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** The 1942 prices take into consideration the value of the property at that time, but they do not take into consideration the disturbance of a man who may be taken off his property as the result of this acquisition. He is entitled to something for his disturbance. This principle is a vital one. It does not affect the future of the soldier, because under the provisions of the Commonwealth-States agreement there is a proviso that irrespective of the price of the land acquired for soldier settlement the soldier may be put on that land at a fair capital value, taking into account all the factors that go to make successful settlement.

**Mr. Collins:** You are going to charge the taxpayers fictitious prices for the land.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I am not advocating charging the taxpayers fictitious prices for the land. I am merely saying we must take into consideration some compensation to settlers who are disturbed. We recognise that principle in regard to leasehold.

**Mr. Jones:** It is recognised in the Act with regard to freehold. It is a matter for the Land Court. The Land Court will take that into consideration.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** It may be recognised, but it is a matter at the discretion of the court. Something more definite should be inserted in the Bill on this particularly important principle.

**Mr. Macdonald:** It is a basic principle.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** It is.

**Mr. Jones:** Why give additional compensation to a person when you are resuming his land for soldier settlement as in comparison with when you are resuming it for any other purpose?

**Mr. NICKLIN:** Under the Public Works Land Resumption Act there are no wholesale resumptions such as are envisaged under this Bill. Under the Public Works Land Resumption Act resumptions are usually of small areas for the purpose of a road or some other public work. There are no resumptions that take away from the settler an area that he had developed over the years or that in some instances take away his livelihood and the equity he has built up over the years. Perhaps this principle could be argued more fully in the Committee stages but I raise it now because we should recognise that the disturbed settler is entitled to a measure of compensation because his livelihood is being disturbed.

With that one exception, the principles of this Bill are sound. They will deal adequately with the question of the acquisition of land for war-service land settlement and I am sure that hon. members hope that as a result of the action that will be taken under this Bill we shall obviate the mistakes that were made in the past and achieve major success in soldier settlement in this State.

**Mr. HILTON** (Carnarvon) (12.17 p.m.): It is pleasing to note that so far the Bill has met with the approval of both sides, except for the little objection just raised by the Leader of the Opposition on the question of compensation. I will not deal with that at the moment because I think that when it is considered in detail hon. members will realise that the principle of compensation is fully recognised with respect to both freehold and leasehold land.

The question of soldier settlement is attracting greater attention each and every day. A large number of men have been discharged from the armed forces and many of them are endeavouring to establish themselves on the land and to make it their future calling in life as speedily as possible. That applies in particular to men who worked in the bush or on the land all their lives. So far as I can see, I do not think there will be enough land to meet the demands of ex-servicemen.

**Mr. Pie:** What do you expect the demand will be?

**Mr. HILTON:** It is impossible to ascertain at present, but it was interesting to note that the Minister said a large number of applications would come from New South

Wales and other States. Those men are entitled to do that under our Constitution, and Queensland offers the best possibilities for soldier settlement. This question is engaging the attention of those men and of all people who do give some thought to the matter each day.

One thing that exercises my mind is the inevitable delay that will arise before these men can be settled on the land. The Leader of the Opposition made some reference to the delay on the part of the Commonwealth Government in bringing down their legislation on this matter. That delay is understandable, first because of the fact that the Commonwealth and State Governments do not want a repetition of the very bad mistakes that were made in soldier settlement after the last war.

**Mr. Pie:** By Governments.

**Mr. HILTON:** By whom?

**Mr. Pie:** By Governments.

**Mr. HILTON:** By everybody associated with soldier settlements. The Governments were not entirely responsible for that. Many men outside the Government service played at least some part in formulating those schemes and they must accept their share of the responsibility.

In order to ensure that those mistakes shall not be repeated on this occasion, very careful consideration was given to a scheme that is to be implemented by the Commonwealth and the States, and because of the searching inquiries that were made and the many discussions that of necessity had to take place, a considerable time has elapsed before legislation could be drafted and brought down in the Federal Parliament.

**Mr. Macdonald:** Still it is inexcusable.

**Mr. HILTON:** The hon. member for Stanley says it is still inexcusable. I do not know how far he has studied the question. I do not know if he has read reports of discussions that have taken place from time to time and the evidence taken by the Rural Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Committee. I am arguing that there is a reasonable answer to the charge of delay, although I say it is regrettable, but I repeat that in order to ensure that we shall not again have those bad mistakes, it is better that there should be some delay. That is only common sense. Be that as it may, it is very pleasing to me to realise that the Government of this State have co-operated to the very fullest extent with the Commonwealth Government in this matter. In addition to co-operating with the Federal Government in the big scheme of soldier settlement that both Governments will sponsor, as the Leader of the Opposition has said, this Government have played their part all along the line.

As the Leader of the Opposition has said, there are three classes of soldier settler. First there is the settler who will buy a piece of land from his own resources, and with the assistance granted under the recent amendment to the Agricultural Bank Act, next there

are the settlers who will settle under this combined scheme, and then there are those who will participate with a priority in the selection of the grazing leases that fall due.

**Mr. Macdonald** interjected.

**Mr. HILTON:** I wish to make a plea for another type of soldier settler, and as I understand the provision of this Bill, I think it can be done without any further amending legislation. This Bill makes provision for the acquisition of land for the purpose of all soldier settlement, and I realise that it is the first step in legislation complementary to the Bill recently introduced in the Federal Parliament. However, despite the fact that it is in some way associated with that—and we gather from the remarks of the Minister in his introductory and second reading speeches, and also from reading the report of the debates in the Federal Parliament that it is definitely associated with that scheme—this Government still have the right to acquire land anywhere without necessarily having to submit that land as a proposal under the combined Commonwealth-States scheme.

The hon. member for Stanley interjected a moment ago that there was no need for any individual soldier to delay purchasing a bit of land and taking advantage of the provisions of the Agricultural Bank Act. I contend that it is not so. A number of ex-servicemen have been successful in acquiring some land. Within the last fortnight I have received no fewer than 60 inquiries from men who have worked on the land all their lives but who did not possess any land before they enlisted, and who are now discharged and want land. So far they have been unsuccessful in getting any, and we must consider the position of these men, who because of the inevitable delay that will take place before the scheme is got under way, will be unable to obtain a piece of land for perhaps 12 months, 18 months, or two years. There may be a number of suitable blocks here and there, perhaps one or two here and two or three in another district. I do not suggest that we should divert the whole staff of experts to investigate these blocks but there are land commissioners and rangers who can make reports pointing out where surplus land may be obtained, virgin land that is not being used but is suitable for settlement. I suggest that the Crown should exercise its right under the provisions of the Bill to resume those blocks and make them available immediately by ballot to many men already discharged from the forces. The blocks should be offered to those men who left the land to go to the war and thus are suited to a life on the land. They could obtain financial aid under the legislation recently passed by this House. I repeat that there is an urgent demand from a great number of these men and the number will grow from week to week. There will be a great deal of discontent if they have to wait for a year, 18 months, or two years before they can settle on the land.

**Mr. Sparkes:** Are you referring mainly now to farms?

**Mr. HILTON:** I am referring mainly to farms—fruit farms, tobacco-growing, dairying or any other useful primary industry that these men could engage in while the big broad scheme was being got under way.

**Mr. Plunkett:** They will die of starvation while they are waiting.

**Mr. HILTON:** That is if they have to wait for the big broad scheme, unless they can enter some other occupation for the time being to help themselves. My plea is for these men. I am not blaming the Commonwealth Government nor do I blame the State Government or the Secretary for Public Lands in this connection. The Minister has clearly shown his enthusiasm in the matter of settling soldiers as speedily as possible and his very carefully considered remarks indicate that he and his officers have given the utmost attention to the problem, but even so delay is inevitable.

Another aspect of further delay before ready-made farms are available is to be found in further facts that I shall relate. I have read the schedule to the appropriate Federal Act, containing the relevant agreement between the Commonwealth and the States. The main features of the agreement are first of all the investigations that the State has been carrying out as speedily as possible. Then there are the very comprehensive reports submitted to the Commonwealth Government relating to them. Then there is the process of acquiring, developing, and improving the land. This Bill expedites the process of acquiring the land very much indeed, but then there is the question of developing and improving the land and making it available as ready-made farms or holdings for the settlers. Again, when that process has been completed, there is the question of a fair and reasonable valuation. I think the terms of the agreement are very sound indeed and provision is made to ensure that the settler will not be placed on a block of land that is over-capitalised. All these things must of necessity involve a considerable time. There is the question too of the suitability of applicants. These men will have to go before a competent authority.

**Mr. Macdonald:** A very important provision.

**Mr. HILTON:** A very important provision and it is contained in the agreement. All these things, including the ascertaining of the suitability and the qualifications of the men concerned, will involve a great deal of time and is very evident to one who has made some study of the whole scheme that a big staff will be necessary to carry the scheme to its logical conclusion. Therefore, I repeat that delay is inevitable but nobody can be blamed for it. And because of that I think that where possible the men who are qualified to go on the land now, men who went from the land to enlist and who are eager to start on the land again should have the opportunity of getting a block of land as speedily as possible here, there, and wherever it can be found.

That is the main suggestion I have to make in regard to this question. The Bill contains clear and very commendable provisions and I think they will meet with the approval of the whole House. In order to expedite this big question I do hope that something will be done for the type of men I have referred to.

**Mr. Sparkes:** Where will you get these farm areas for resumption purposes?

**Mr. HILTON:** In some cases the reports of land commissioners will be useful in this respect. Investigations have been made in favoured districts over a big area. There we have great scope for subdivision or resumption. The hon. member knows as well as I do that there are areas in the State where only three or four blocks may be available. I could take him to certain districts and point to good land still in its virgin state. It might make suitable orchards or tobacco farms or dairy farms. There is not a great deal of it, but in certain areas quite a number of blocks could be made available for those purposes. That is a phase associated with this settlement that should be investigated as quickly as possible.

**Mr. Nicklin:** That is where local committees would be invaluable.

**Mr. HILTON:** I agree to a certain extent with local committees, but they would have to operate in an honorary capacity.

**Mr. Nicklin:** Definitely.

**Mr. HILTON:** There is no need for any special provision to be made in legislation for local committees. I know that in every district returned men from the last war with ripe experience in land matters would make their services available, in fact, they would be only too happy to set themselves up as committees to give advice to anyone who requires it.

**Mr. Macdonald:** And they would be the best skilled, too.

**Mr. HILTON:** That is so.

**Mr. SLESSAR (Dalby) (12.33 p.m.):** I am pleased to associate myself with this very important Bill. I say important advisedly, because in my opinion it is one of the most important that has been brought down in this House for a considerable time.

The Bill, firstly, will enable the Government to implement their agreement with the Commonwealth Government for the settlement of discharged soldiers. Every hon. member will agree that the settlement of discharged soldiers is a very important subject indeed, and should not be treated lightly, because we all should remember the unfortunate and disastrous failures resulting from soldier settlement after the last war. Those failures were mainly due to the fact that large areas of land were resumed without any regard whatsoever to its quality or suitability for the purposes to which it was being put. In many cases discharged soldiers were settled on land in remote districts and little assistance was given to them. In addition a large number of the

men were unsuitable for the type of farming they undertook. Those men were told that they could go out into various districts and grow pineapples and other fruit and other primary products, but they were totally unsuited for that class of primary production, and lacked experience. From the knowledge I have gained in primary production I strongly believe that we should first classify our lands as they become available for soldier settlement to determine what they are most suitable for.

We know large areas of land are frozen for the purpose of investigation for the settlement of returned men. After freezing that land we should at once set about classifying it to ascertain its productive value. Some portions of the land in the various districts may be suitable for dairying, other portions for wheat-growing, grazing or mixed farming. All the areas would have to be classified according to what they were suitable for. In my opinion that is the first step in soldier settlement that we should take. Then we should determine the living area in each locality where land is frozen.

**Mr. Sparkes:** The living area should be determined.

**Mr. SLESSAR:** That is very important, to my way of thinking. I am not satisfied that it can be done unless we set up local committees of practical farmers and graziers in the various districts where land is frozen to assist and guide the departmental officers. I think that is a very important question that should receive careful consideration.

**Mr. Sparkes:** The department could consult those men.

**Mr. SLESSAR:** Yes, that is my idea. I suggest that honorary committees be set up. They would not be paid servants of the Crown. I want to make it quite clear that I do not in any way wish to depreciate the value of our own departmental officers. They are quite capable and are endeavouring to do a good job.

At 12.36 p.m.,

**Mr. DUGGAN (Toowoomba)** relieved **Mr. Speaker** in the chair.

**Mr. SLESSAR:** It would be very difficult for a departmental officer from Brisbane or Dalby to make an investigation over a vast area of country and determine what the soil in each locality was suitable for, and its productive capacity. That is why I suggest that local committees in each locality where land is frozen, acting in an honorary capacity, to guide and assist the investigating officers, would be invaluable. Those investigating officers, after collecting all the information from the local settlers and local committees, could determine what the land was suitable for, and what would be a living area, and they would be able to advise the department in Brisbane whether that frozen area was suitable for acquisition by the department.

**Mr. Jones:** Who will do this—the local committees?

**Mr. SLESSAR:** The departmental officers with the help of the local committees. The local committees would advise the departmental officers in determining whether this land was suitable to be subdivided into areas for different classes of farming or grazing.

**Mr. Jones:** You cannot get any number of farmers in any area to agree. They are 50-50 in the Wandoan area on the question of area.

**Mr. SLESSAR:** Yes, that is so. Of course, we cannot look at any area of country during a drought period and judge it accurately.

**Mr. Sparkes:** The same applies to looking at country when it is over-good.

**Mr. SLESSAR:** That is so. When we determine the area of land that is most suitable for closer settlement and determine the living area, then we must classify our applicants for such land according to their knowledge and land experience. It would be of no avail to put a cane-grower from North Queensland on a wheat farm in the Dalby district or a fruit-grower in the Stanthorpe area, or vice versa. Applicants should be classified according to their experience in wheat-growing, fat-lamb-raising, topping off of cattle, dairying, grazing, cane-growing, and general farming. That is very important. I have seen cane-growers from the north come south to the wheat areas or fattening cattle areas, and they have been dismal failures. It takes many years to pick up the necessary knowledge to become efficient farmers in any particular locality.

**Mr. Macdonald:** Even in the same industry the conditions in different districts often vary.

**Mr. SLESSAR:** That is so, and it is borne out by the experience of the southern wheat farmers who have come to Queensland to grow wheat. The climatic and other conditions differ so much that although they had a knowledge of the industry in another locality, they have to gain experience in the district in which they are now farming.

**Mr. Macdonald:** They must serve an apprenticeship.

**Mr. SLESSAR:** That is so. They have to modify their ideas to suit local conditions.

It was very interesting to hear the previous speakers. The Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Carnarvon each made a very fine speech and put forward some splendid suggestions. In the main I agree with most of the suggestions they made. I am very much concerned about the delay in placing many thousands of returned soldiers on the land that is to be acquired in the very near future. Many sons of farmers who have returned from the war are constantly asking me for informa-

tion as to when they will be able to get land and when this land settlement scheme will be in operation. I know it is no fault of the State Government and probably the Commonwealth Government have a very good reason why this action was not taken earlier, but I do not suppose any of us here or in the Commonwealth Parliament really thought the war would end so quickly. However, the position must be faced, but even so, if we intend to settle large numbers of men on ready-made farms we shall be many years settling the men who require land. First of all, there will be difficulty in getting the necessary labour to improve the land. It will have to be subdivided. Then building operations will have to be embarked on. The land must be prepared for cultivation. All this work takes time and I forecast that it will take from three to five years. In fact, I really think at least five years will elapse before we can settle any great number of returned men on ready-made farms.

I suggest that at the present time, as many returned men desire to settle on the land and to carry out their own improvements certain land should be made available for them and they should be helped financially to go ahead and carry out their own improvements, being financed in the same way as is envisaged under the Commonwealth-States scheme. This would have the effect of placing these men on the land speedily and of allowing them to earn incomes from their own properties by developing them to their own liking. In the years gone by settlers received loans from the Agricultural Bank and other financial institutions as they gradually improved and developed their properties over a number of years. I realise that that is the hard way. I do think that we should allow men who want land to take it up and we should make finance available for them to improve their own farms according to their own ideas. The ready-made-farm idea is probably a good one from the theoretical point of view, but from the practical point of view it is not so good. In actual practice no two farmers develop and improve their farms in the same way. In a street, it is possible to see a row of houses of the same type but we never find two farms developed in the same way in any one district. This is due to the fact that farmers have different ideas on the layout and working of farms. I suggest that consideration be given to making farms available under this Bill as soon as possible without waiting a lengthy time for the ready-made farms that have been suggested.

**Mr. Sparkes:** Where would you get the land to make the farms available quickly?

**Mr. SLESSAR:** In the same way as we propose to acquire the land at present under this Bill.

**Mr. Sparkes:** I thought you meant Crown land.

**Mr. SLESSAR:** I am doubtful whether Crown lands are available in sufficient quantities in farming areas. I do not think there are

big enough areas of Crown land in farming districts for this purpose. Therefore, we shall have to acquire the land in the same way as is proposed under the general scheme.

I am pleased to see that a large area of land has been frozen for the purposes of soldier settlement. I note from the Minister's remarks that something like 4,000,000 acres is under investigation and it is noticeable that some of it embraces the most fertile land in the State.

In my own electorate an area of 2,700,000 acres of land has been frozen, of which about 440,000 acres have received Commonwealth approval for acquisition.

**Mr. Morris:** Is that settled or unsettled land?

**Mr. SLESSAR:** It is mainly settled land. It is not all fully developed. I should say that in the Dalby district there is ample scope for further development in agriculture and dairying. I quite agree with the freezing of large areas of land in that district as it could be developed into excellent farms. Further out we come to the Wandoan-Taroom country, which in my opinion is not good farming land and would therefore have to be developed in a different way. In the Dulacca, Tara and Condamine districts large areas of suitable land could be effectively acquired without affecting the original owners to any great extent. Large areas of land in those localities are not being used to the fullest extent of their capacity. In fact, thousands of acres of land are still in a virgin state.

I mention these facts because I think that a very close investigation should be made in those districts, particularly in relation to living areas and the purposes for which the land is most suitable. The land in the Dalby district is very suitable for the settling of soldiers on areas of about 1,200 acres. An area of that size would be ideal for any class of farm in that district. In the coastal belt, however, the areas could be made much smaller. No doubt many large areas of land there would be ideal for dairy farms, but the farther inland we go the drier the conditions become and we get into areas that are totally unsuitable for dairying.

Included in the areas that have been frozen for further investigation there are many varying classes of land, and much care will have to be given to classifying the land to determine the purposes for which it can be used. The farms should differ in area according to the district in which they were situated. In the Wandoan-Taroom, Condamine, Dulacca, and Tara districts the greater part of the land would not be very suitable for the settlement of soldiers unless the areas were from 3,500 to 5,000 acres, according to the class of country.

**Mr. Jones:** They are certainly not dairy-ing propositions.

**Mr. SLESSAR:** No. That is why I have mentioned that fact. I do not think that dairying propositions should go any further

west than Chinchilla, Dalby, Jandowae, Bell and similar localities, and should otherwise be confined to the coast areas. I do not think that districts over 100 miles west of the Dividing Range are suitable for dairying. Some big dairying properties on the Downs are very successful.

**An Opposition Member:** Did you say west of the Great Dividing Range?

**Mr. SLESSAR:** Yes, the land there is not nearly as suitable for dairying as the Coastal Belt, which is apparent from the fact that dairymen on small acreages on the coast side are able to make an excellent living. The further inland we go away from the Great Dividing Range the larger the areas required to run sufficient dairy cattle to make a living.

This Bill should be welcomed by the majority of people who are desirous of helping the returned soldiers to be rehabilitated on the land. It is the desire of most people, especially those interested in the settlement of returned soldiers, to see that they are rehabilitated with as little delay as possible. I am sure that the Commonwealth and State Governments will get together with the object of acquiring the necessary land and especially to make a start with resumptions to take place after investigations have been made into the suitability of the land. I know that the Minister is doing everything possible in this connection but I strongly recommend that the owners of areas that have been frozen be informed as soon as possible of what areas are actually to be acquired. At the present time the owners have no idea whether properties are to be acquired by the Government for this purpose or not and it is essential that they should be advised with as little delay as possible, so that there is no unnecessary hold-up. Improvements and production are suffering while this cloud hangs over the land affected. They should be told whether it is proposed to acquire their land in the very near future or not with as little delay as possible.

As my time is just about up I shall reserve any further comment on various points of the Bill until the Committee stage. The Bill is one of the most important introduced into this House for some considerable time and it is the duty of each and every one of us, first of all to see that the interests of the returned soldiers are safeguarded and then that all possible aid is given to them so that this land-settlement scheme will be the success that it deserves. I am satisfied that most of the Government Party have had sufficient experience of land settlement after the last war to guide us along the right road in the settlement of returned soldiers in the future.

At 2.15 p.m.,

Mr. SPEAKER resumed the chair.

**Mr. MAHER (West Moreton) (2.15 p.m.):** The Minister, in introducing this Bill to make provision for the acquisition of land for the purpose of war-service land settlement, undoubtedly faces a herculean task.

To that extent he has the sympathy of every hon. member of the House who has any understanding of the problems that are involved and the obstacles to be overcome.

The first point that must be borne in mind in settling a large number of returned servicemen on the land in the conditions that have been laid down by the Federal Government is that it is going to take a mighty long time. Anybody who is impatient may continue to be so because a tremendous amount of spade work has to be done in taking over land from those who hold it, and then in subdividing it and carrying out the requisite improvements. If we take into account the fact that something like 4,000,000 acres of country have been frozen for the purposes of settling returned men on the land it will help us to understand how gigantic is the task. Therefore, as I say, the Minister is entitled to the sympathy of the House and to the help and co-operation of all those who want to see a sound scheme of land settlement for our returned boys who are land-minded and experienced.

There is one factor involved in this scheme that should be emphasised, that is, the rights of the owner or lessee of the land. We all recognise our duty to settle men on the land but we must not lose sight of the right of the man who has been asked to yield up his property in the terms of this Bill. This Parliament should take into account that many of the men whose areas have been frozen are old pioneer settlers. Many of them were born on those areas; they have reared their families on those areas; they have had to contend with all the ups and downs of the life of the land—the hard struggles and the moods and tenses of the land, fires, floods, and droughts—to say nothing of the tremendous onslaught of prickly-pear in the early days. Therefore, Parliament is entitled to take into account the rights of those who are now being asked to yield up their land and lay down the principle, and see to it that it is carried out, that they are justly treated. That is the important consideration that I submit for the consideration of the House when a Bill of this kind comes before it. I would urge on the Minister, who by this has a proper understanding of the problem—the tenor of speeches made from the Government benches also would seem to suggest it—that it is important not to subdivide the resumed land into blocks that are too small.

That is a great danger. It would be far better to have a limited scheme of land settlement; it would be far better to settle 2,000 returned servicemen on adequate areas from which could be drawn good, comfortable livings, than have 5,000 soldiers settled on small areas where the conditions were risky, discouraging, and where sufficient wealth could not be won to make the ventures worth while.

**Mr. Devries:** Where they would be pulling the devil by the tail.

**Mr. MAHER:** Exactly, as the hon. member for Gregory says—where they would be

pulling the devil by the tail. There is abundance of land in the State, and there is no reason why we should take a very narrow view and try to create a peasantry with great numbers of men struggling on the land and battling for their daily bread and finding it difficult to pay their way. There is no need to create a peasantry of that kind. On the other hand, we should try to create a prosperous yeomanry on the land. If we do, in time the problems of closer settlement will solve themselves, for this reason: if you put a man today on a block of 10,000 acres, obviously over a lifetime he works upon it aided by his sons, and he improves the country sufficiently to determine its real carrying capacity, and eventually that land is divided according to the wisdom and experience of the owner into areas that are capable of supporting his sons; and over a period of time the whole question of closer settlement solves itself in an easy way for the State. We are only a young country and to resume large areas of country and break them up into small areas that are only going to cause poverty, difficulty, discouragement, and broken hearts to many stout fellows who played their part in this great war and—it may be said—helped to keep the roofs over our heads—would be a most regrettable step. Let us deal with them fairly and justly.

**Mr. Foley:** What do you call a decent area?

**Mr. MAHER:** It varies in every locality. I should say that in the area represented by the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs, in the Wandoan-Taroom area, for example, it would vary from 3,000 acres in close proximity to the railway line, to 5,000 to 7,000 and 10,000 acres further out.

**Mr. Jones:** As dairying propositions?

**Mr. MAHER:** No, in areas not confined to dairying. I do not think we should get the dairying complex.

**Mr. Foley:** If you were looking for grazing lands you would not disturb those on that land now.

**Mr. MAHER:** There are larger areas that could be made available. Anyhow, there would not be much wisdom in disturbing the man in possession. We have to recognise the need to provide land, wherever it comes from, for the needs of land-minded returned servicemen. We must get it from some part of the State. I think all parts of the State within the reasonable rainfall area should make some contribution in that respect. Naturally the areas vary. There was talk of 1,500-acre dairy farms in the area represented by the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs and that represented by the hon. member for Dalby, but the difficulty there is the provision of water. Many bores have been sunk on the larger areas, and the experience has not always been favourable.

Many men expended large sums of money putting down bores as deep as 1,000 feet with their only reward salty water unfit for stock or no water at all. There was a capital loss

of £500 or £600 for boring and these people had to bear it. Even though water was obtained at a depth of 600, 700 or 800 feet the cost of boring today, round about 11s. a foot at the present time in those districts, plus the equipment—windmill, casing, supply tank, troughing and an auxiliary engine in case there is not enough wind—makes a hole in £800 to £1,000. That is over-capitalising in small areas, therefore there are difficult problems to be overcome when small areas in a district are suggested. Irrespective of the richness of soil and the suitability in other respects, if permanent water cannot be provided, that country is not worth anything in small areas for settlement by returned soldiers. We must not lose sight of that fact. It is an important point.

I wish to quote a letter that illustrates what happened after the last war. It is written by John Hughes, B.A., L.L.B., from London—

“The example I have in mind concerns a friend, a young returned soldier, who had been trained at Hawkesbury (N.S.W.), one of the best agricultural colleges in the Commonwealth. After completing his training there in a wide range of agricultural subjects, he went on to an irrigation area at Leeton, Western N.S.W., and after spending two years there, and another year on a large farm at Tamworth, in the North-west, which produced barley and lucerne, he enlisted. On his return, he was granted a Government lease of about 300 acres at Gundagai on the Sydney-Melbourne railway route. He went in for sheep and dairy farming, and he married. Though his training and his knowledge were extensive enough to make him dubious about the prospect of making a decent living on such a small acreage, and although he insisted that the holding was not good country for lucerne, he was told by the Government Repatriation experts that, as there was not enough land to go around if all would-be settlers were to be given a holding, the Government had decided to limit the size of the holdings to 300 acres; and they added, in effect, that its attitude to the settlers was ‘take it or leave it.’ He received in all, about £1,500 from the Government as an advance, repayable over twenty-five years. For the first five years, the repayment was to be one of interest only, at the rate of 4 per cent; for the next twenty years, the capital sum had to be repaid in equal instalments of £75 a year.

“My friend had been fighting a losing fight for ten years when I went to stay with him for a fortnight in 1933. He worked long hours, averaging about twelve hours daily, often milking his own cows. He had to contend, too, with drought, which made lucerne-growing as precarious as the job of keeping his cows in good condition, and fattening his lambs for the local butcher. He made application after application to the Repatriation authorities for a larger holding to enable him to carry on, and he was sinking deeper and deeper into debt. In 1936, after 13 years of heart-breaking work, he surrendered his holding,

got a clearance for the debts which had piled up and which he was quite unable to meet—and started life all over again; in his middle forties, with his wife and two children!—running a boarding house near Sydney.”

Hon. members will see that the root cause of his non-success was the failure of the experts to draw up a scheme providing for a sufficient living area. That is an instance quoted in one of the pamphlets that hon. members receive from time to time entitled, “Thinking Ahead.” It is sent from London and contains much useful information on various problems in the post-war period.

Another illustration is that of Bengalla station near Goondiwindi. Part of Bengalla was resumed after the last war, much as we propose to resume country today. It was opened for selection on the basis of the compensation arranged with the owners and, as far as my memory serves me, 20 to 30 returned soldiers were settled on areas ranging from about 600 acres to 1,000 acres.

I saw that settlement scheme in operation. Five or six of those settlers applied themselves with vigour to wresting a living from the small areas—they undertook dairy farming and battled along for several years—but the great majority merely accepted the blocks and ran a few head of cattle either on agistment or, in some instances, where they were able to buy them, a few for themselves. In many cases they went out to work in order to keep the farms. As soon as the residential period ended these men placed their properties on the market for sale.

**Mr. Jones:** What was the size of the areas?

**Mr. MAHER:** From memory I think they ranged from about 600 acres to 1,000 acres, and this was in a good district. It was Yelarbon, which is a good district with a fair average rainfall, but the areas were too small. I am not prepared to say that any regard was paid to the important matter of the suitability of the returned soldiers concerned for a life on the land, but from my personal experience, the general trend was to hold the blocks until the residential term had expired, and then sell them. And who bought them? The bulk of them reverted to the original station property and the rest were bought by another man who came into the district and formed a consolidated larger holding. You can see the irony of fate if under this scheme of resumption part of Bengalla was resumed again and we went through a repetition of what experience has proved to be an unsound course of action. We must be guided by experience, and this is a notable example to be found in the records of the department if the Minister wishes to investigate the matter.

I have an extract from a very interesting book written by Mr. Idriess entitled “Onward Australia.” On page 168 Mr. Idriess says—

“To illustrate the benefit to the State and to all Australia of the successful resumption of such lands I cite the case of

the old Mt. Hutton station, in the Roma-Injune district. In 1915 Mt. Hutton was a pastoral holding of 274 square miles, or 235,000 acres. Seven men and a manager were employed on all that country, which carried only 7,000 head of cattle. In 1919-20 it was resumed as a soldiers' settlement. The result was disastrous. The blocks were too small to give a reasonable chance of a living, while to make matters worse, many of the men were inexperienced. In a few years the majority had abandoned their holdings penniless.

"The Land Administration Board then increased the maximum area that could be held by one person. Men used to the land eagerly snapped up those blocks."

He goes on to say—

"Today Mt. Hutton area supports a population of approximately 300, carries over 10,000 head of cattle, and 60,000 sheep."

That shows that the policy pursued by the Land Administration Board over the shattered fortunes of the poor old Diggers of 1914-1918 was a sound one. The result has been to create a successful yeomanry on the land in that Mt. Hutton area. There are points that should warn the Government, the Federal Government in particular, who have not made the same close study of this subject, against settling tens of thousands of returned men on small areas of land. That would only lead to another disaster and help to discourage men who are entitled to much better treatment.

Of course, too, evidence has been submitted from time to time of the poor class of country round Beerburrum and Coominya and of the small areas there that helped to break the hearts of the men who returned from the last war. All those facts should warn the Minister and this Government, and also the Federal Government, of the dangers involved in placing men on areas that are too small to enable them to win a living from the soil.

**Mr. Jones:** A few days ago I received a deputation representing the original Beerburrum settlers, asking that land at Beerburrum be thrown open for returned soldiers of this war.

**Mr. MAHER:** I should want to look it over very carefully before I agreed to such a request, unless of course some of the outlying country is of much better quality than the rest. As I say, the areas on which these men are settled must not be too small. Let us take our experience after the last war as a guide in this important matter.

We come now to the problems of resumption and compensation. It should be agreed by every fair-minded member of the Assembly that the man who is giving up his property is entitled to just compensation. The Minister has pointed out that compensation will be based on the values ruling in 1942. That is fair enough on the surface, but when we examine the terms of the Land Act of 1910 the provision therein made as

the basis of compensation in respect of pastoral holdings, grazing farms, and grazing homesteads will cause much hardship, particularly to holders of grazing farms and grazing homesteads. The principal Act provides for compensation on the basis of 6d. a sheep or 4s. a head of cattle, with a carrying capacity as determined, multiplied by the number of years still attached to the lease, limited, of course, to 10 years. This amendment provides for an additional year, thus making the maximum 11 years.

Taking that formula as the basis, a very great injustice will be done to the grazing farmer and the grazing-homestead lessee. In the case of those blocks, the unimproved market value in 1942 was, beyond any shadow of doubt, from 8s. to 10s. an acre, and the same value would apply today even on a very conservative basis. That being so, a man with a 6,000-acre grazing homestead that was the subject of resumption would have been able to insert in his selling value in 1942 the sum of £3,000 as the unimproved value of the land. An area of 6,000 acres would entitle him to add £3,000 to the selling price of his holding, and he could easily get it.

**Mr. Walsh:** What are you talking about now, freehold or leasehold?

**Mr. MAHER:** I am talking about leasehold—grazing homesteads—and the basis of compensation that is provided in the principal Act.

**Mr. Walsh:** The unimproved value?

**Mr. MAHER:** Yes.

**Mr. Walsh:** What are those people paying the Crown in rent?

**Mr. MAHER:** I could not tell the hon. gentleman offhand. The fact remains that that was the market value and the Crown did not question it in 1942 and prior thereto when the property was submitted to the Minister for the right to transfer on sale. The Minister did not question that aspect of the matter at all and so the sale was approved. Once that type of grazing farm of, say, 6,000 acres is resumed, the maximum amount that the Land Court or the Resumption Board, as the case may be, is able to grant as compensation is on the basis of 2s. 11d. an acre, in round figures £880, according to the formula contained in the principal Act, as against the market value of 10s. an acre in 1942. Therefore this grazing farmer, a lessee of the Crown, is in those circumstances obliged to drop about £2,000 in the unimproved value of his property under resumption as against when it is sold on the open market.

**Mr. Gledson:** Do you want the returned soldiers to bear that?

**Mr. MAHER:** The point I am making is that this man has had to live on his block and to carry out the improvements over many years, that he has reared his family and battled against the prickly-pear, and he is entitled to a fair spin when it comes to compensation. That is his right, and I

should be sorry to think that the Government would not consider his position favourably.

**Mr. Jones:** This formula has applied since 1910.

**Mr. MAHER:** I agree that it has applied since 1910, but there the Minister is hoist with his own petard, because the conditions that obtained back in 1910 are utterly changed in 1945. For example, the purchasing value of the pound Australian has shrunk tremendously in 1945. Since 1910 the demand for land has greatly increased, and conditions have changed enormously. The conditions that obtained in 1910 when that Act was passed through this Parliament should not blind us to the changed conditions of 1945. Therefore, I ask the Minister to look at the matter kindly, in that light, and place himself in the position of the small man on a 6,000-acre block, not a big holder, but a grazing-farm lessee, or a grazing-homestead lessee, and realise how these resumption provisions are going to deprive him of his right to the sum of about £2,000. Once he has been dispossessed of the property and been paid his compensation he will probably go on to the market to buy another property. Will the man who is vendor of the other property offer his grazing homestead for sale on the same basis on which the court forced the first man to yield up his property? No. He will say that for the improvements and the unimproved value of the land he wants 30s. an acre.

**Mr. Jones:** If he buys freehold that is his business, but he might get another Crown leasehold.

**Mr. MAHER:** I am making a comparison in regard to leaseholds. If after having had the property resumed from him he goes to a zone where there has been no freezing of land for returned-soldier purposes and inspects a property, another grazing homestead or grazing farm, and objects to the unimproved value that the prospective vendor has inserted in his price, and says to him, "The Resumption Board allowed me only 2s. 11d. an acre for mine," the vendor will reply, "I am sorry, I am not a seller." That will be his right. But we are asking in the Bill that the grazing-farm lessee or grazing-homestead lessee should be forced to accept 2s. 11d. an acre for the unimproved value of his land when the market price is 8s. to 10s. an acre.

Therefore you are depriving that man of his capital rights, of a sum approximating £2,000, and he will be that much short when he wants to buy a similar class of property.

**Mr. Jones:** You would not suggest that he should be compensated on the basis of freehold?

**Mr. MAHER:** I suggest that he be compensated on his unimproved market value.

**Mr. Walsh:** He does not own the land.

**Mr. MAHER:** No-one suggests he does, but he has a certain goodwill and a certain right and privilege attaching to the land

that he has worked for for many years, that he has improved, and for which he has paid his rent faithfully to the Crown. Surely he is entitled to what the market would return to him when he puts it into the hands of an agent for sale. The Minister would not say, if he placed that property in the hands of an agent before this scheme was finalised, that he should be prevented from getting that £3,000 on the basis of 10s. an acre unimproved value? There is no record of the Minister's ever having done so.

**Mr. Jones:** Yes.

**Mr. Walsh:** You ask the hon. member for Aubigny.

**Mr. MAHER:** The man who has sacrificed years of experience on our Western country is entitled to keep this extra money. That money will not come down here and be spent on the racehorses. It will help the lessee in getting another property, in improving it and in expanding production. Why be mean and niggardly with a man like that? He is the salt of the earth. We are singling out a special class of men, graziers and selectors, to resume their land and they are accepting it without a protest. They only ask for a fair spin. Take the case of an established business man in this city. Would you expect him to yield some of his turnover and sacrifice part of his business premises in order to establish returned soldiers in business?

**Mr. Jones:** Most of the soldiers went to the war without any great protest either.

**Mr. MAHER:** I realise that. That is not the issue. Here one class is singled out to have their property resumed. I am merely drawing an analogy and asking whether, if the Government stepped in and compelled, say, Allan & Stark Ltd., or even Bruce Pie, to yield some of their stock and to sacrifice part of their building—

**Mr. Pie:** That is not a comparison. (Laughter.)

**Mr. MAHER:** In order to establish returned soldiers in business on a co-operative basis there would be a substantial outcry against interfering with the rights of trade and commerce. Here we have a landowner singled out. He is willing to accept his responsibility. All he says is, "At least do not be niggardly in compensating me."

**Mr. Jones:** It is the same old cry—"Give the soldiers the best land but don't touch mine."

**Mr. MAHER:** No, I am not suggesting that. That is not the theme. The theme is that these grazing-farm lessees and these grazing-homestead lessees—the smaller men in the grazing industry, the men who have 6,000-acre blocks carrying from 300 to 600 head of cattle, according to the nature of the improvements—who have struggled and improved their country all the time, are asked to submit to these conditions. There is no 44-hour week for them. They have no

leisure. They work from early in the morning to the setting of the sun. The State owes them a debt it can never repay.

**Mr. Jones:** They owe the soldiers a duty, too.

**Mr. MAHER:** That is so—no-one denies that—but these men have to yield up their properties.

**Mr. Jones:** The Act has stood since 1910 and has never been questioned.

**Mr. MAHER:** For the simple reason that no man who ever took up land under the terms and provisions of that Act ever dreamt for one moment that he would ever be called upon to face a gigantic land resumption to meet a soldier-settlement scheme such as is proposed now. No man who took up land under lease from the Crown—or very few men—ever looked through all the provisions of the Act. They are hard-working fellows and leave it to the legal profession or to members of Parliament to puzzle it out for them and to advise them from time to time. They take on the land as an opportunity to earn their daily bread. The fact that it has never been challenged since 1910 proves nothing at all.

All I can say to the Minister before I leave this important point is this: if no discretionary power is given to the Land Court and/or Resumption Board to meet this situation many decent Crown lessees are going to face ruination when they are dispossessed of their land in the terms of this Bill. That is a sober statement of fact.

There are a number of other matters I should have liked to touch upon. I know that many old Diggers of the 1914-18 war have had their properties frozen and some of them have sons in the various Australian fighting services, and I think the Minister might kindly take into consideration their difficulties and perhaps recommend the lifting of the freezing ban in respect of men who are in that position. I know one or two cases of that kind and the men feel a little bit hurt about it. They are returned men themselves and their sons are in the fighting forces, and the areas they hold are barely sufficient for themselves and their sons. I think it would be a nice gesture if the Minister were to look into such cases and lift the ban on them.

Let me say in conclusion that I hope these points will be taken into account: first, fair compensation to those who have to yield up their land; secondly, proper living areas for the returned men; thirdly, prompt decisions as to the areas to be resumed so that owners of land now frozen may be free to make improvements and/or sell their properties, as they were before the freezing ban. In other words, I hope the Minister will not keep the freezing ban on a property for an indefinite period, but as soon as possible he will lift it from such properties as the Government do not intend to take. I feel sure the Minister will look into the whole matter sympathetically. I should in particular like him to

study carefully the clause dealing with the compensation of small lessees.

**Mr. SPARKES (Dalby) (2.54 p.m.):** I desire to congratulate the Minister on the Bill he has introduced. I wish to impress on him also something that he probably knows already—the big job that is ahead of him. I think the Minister is sincere, and I doubt if there is a man in the House who is better equipped to accomplish the task that is in front of him. At the outset I would point out that any criticism that I might offer is not offered with any derogatory intention towards the Minister but with a view to helping him with technical knowledge in the big job that lies ahead of him. Undoubtedly, irrespective of where soldiers are settled and the size of the area given to them, there will be many failures. It would be utterly impossible to place a large body of men on the land at one time without having a large number of failures.

**Mr. Nicklin:** Irrespective of whether they are soldiers.

**Mr. SPARKES:** That is so. You know, Mr. Speaker, as a westerner, that we have failures with men drifting on to the land each year so you can imagine that in placing thousands of men on the land there must be unsuitable men among them and there will be failures amongst them. But many of these failures can be eliminated in the first place when the settler goes on the land. I wish to make one point and make it plainly. I ask the Minister to err on the side of generosity when the soldier first goes on the land. It is better to give him a few hundred acres too many than to have him struggling and half his time rushing down to the Government for assistance. We have seen that throughout the years. We find people agitating for smaller areas. I speak with a very practical knowledge. The failure of the last soldier settlement was not caused so much by the Government of the day as by the fact that they were absolutely rushed into the business from agitations from small local committees for smaller areas.

**Mr. Jones:** That is quite true.

**Mr. SPARKES:** That was one of the great difficulties in the area known as Burrandowan in the Kingaroy district. The scheme set up by the Government was for 2,200 acres but there was a large petition, signed by everyone. There was a hue and cry that the soldiers were coming back from overseas and we must get more soldiers on the land. I think that the local committee there was more concerned with how many men there would be in that district to boost up their town than the living of the very men they seemed so anxious to help. What happened? I doubt if there is one soldier today left on that great settlement. Had it been subdivided into larger areas, perhaps 5,000 acres, those soldiers probably would be more or less prosperous settlers on that land today.

So far as the Dalby district is concerned, the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs by way of interjection to the hon. member

for West Moreton asked, "What do you say is a suitable area?" Of course, that depends entirely on the district; 1 acre might be sufficient in a very suitable area and 1,000, 15,000, or 20,000 acres quite unsuitable in another.

**Mr. Walsh:** It depends.

**Mr. SPARKES:** It depends on the district.

**Mr. Walsh:** The industry too.

**Mr. SPARKES:** And the industry. A living area is not the number of acres but the production a man can make off the area to give him a decent living. He should have the right to make a decent living and not a breadline living. The sooner he becomes a taxpayer of the State the better. That is what we should aim at. We realise that closer settlement is inevitable and is the right and proper thing for the development of any country. It must come. There are two means of getting it. Closer settlement, if it is satisfactory, is all right but closer settlement where the settlers have to run to the Government all the time is very unsatisfactory.

In New South Wales there is a very good example. Some years ago in the sheep areas a good many of the selections were much closer than they are today. These areas were known as marginal areas and about £1,000,000 each year had to be provided by the Commonwealth Government to keep those fellows on the land. Can that be classed as successful closer settlement?

It unquestionably is not. If those areas had been big enough for the men to run sheep on a small part of them, with a little wheat, we should have had successful settlement.

One district that is more affected by this Bill than any other in Queensland and in which the biggest area is earmarked is the Dalby district, and having spent 30 years there I claim to have a little practical knowledge of the area. The Dalby district may be divided into three sections. First, from the point of view of wheatgrowing and fat-lamb-raising there are the open plains. From the point of view of dairying we have the brigalow scrub. It depends upon the industry in which the settler wishes to engage. If he wishes to go in for dairying the brigalow-scrub country in the Dalby district would be the best. If he desires to grow wheat and to raise fat lambs the open plains would be the best. The third section in that district is the forest country.

**Mr. Jones:** What area in the brigalow scrub do you suggest would be suitable for dairying?

**Mr. SPARKES:** The pick of it, with water, should not be below 640 acres.

**Mr. Jones:** And that is small enough, too.

**Mr. SPARKES:** But I do not want hon. members opposite to accuse me of wishing to retain big areas. I know men who are

making a living there on 640 acres, but they have big families and are working long hours. I should like to see a minimum of 1,000 acres in the brigalow-scrub country. There is a good deal of scrub country in which 1,000 acres would give a good successful living to many men.

**Mr. Jones:** I was surprised when Jondaryan was cut up. I notice the areas run from 300 to 500 acres. I thought they were small.

**Mr. SPARKES:** But that is not brigalow-scrub country.

**Mr. Jones:** I appreciate that, but the area is small.

**Mr. SPARKES:** It is small, and these men are going to be in trouble.

**Mr. Collins:** What do you say should be the area for fat-lamb-raising and wheat-growing?

**Mr. SPARKES:** That is the open plains country. The 300-acre block man will have a heap of black oats in his crop within a few years. All through the Downs today it is possible to see all sorts of pests that have resulted from intensive cultivation from year to year. Anyone who knows anything about land knows that if you continue to kill the natural grass, which you do by ploughing, you get all the pests in the world. Kill out the natural grass, which is a check on almost any pest, and the pests come. I venture the opinion that even now a very big proportion of the wheat grown in the Dalby district will be spoilt by black oats. I can remember when there was not a black oat in the district, but today there is a large area of it, and everyone knows the curse of the black oat from the point of view of gristing good flour.

Some years ago the Dalby district was endeavouring to farm under the old conditions, with the horse and plough, but this was unsuccessful. If the Government put soldiers on ready-made farms there are many costs to consider.

First of all, the soldier has to have a house to live in. Then he has to have plant, which is a very expensive item today. If he intends to buy a tractor, no matter how small it is, it will cost at least £500. In addition, of course, he will have to buy other machinery, and by the time he gets a few milking cows it will cost about £10 an acre in the Dalby district to put a soldier on the land.

**Mr. Collins:** Does that mean it would cost £10,000 for a 1,000-acre block?

**Mr. SPARKES:** Yes.

**Mr. Mann:** I think you are exaggerating.

**Mr. SPARKES:** I am not exaggerating. I was accused of exaggerating the other day, but later on when discussing the Estimates I will show hon. members on the other side where they exaggerate.

I was asked to give evidence before the Committee that sat in Dalby, and while I

was giving my evidence the chairman asked me if I had any objection to his bringing in Mr. Brimblecombe and another gentleman, whose name I cannot remember for the moment. Those men then came in, and in every instance the cost that they gave was higher than mine. I put it at £10,000, while they put it at a higher figure. I will give you an instance. A block of land in the middle of Jimbour Plains was sold the other day at £10 an acre by people named McMillen. That sale was passed and the deal has been completed. I ask the hon. member for Brisbane how he reconciles his statement that I am exaggerating with that.

The hon. member for West Moreton or the Leader of the Opposition has said, "Don't let us deny our boys that better land." I say that nothing is too good for these boys. For that reason, I ask the Minister to be very careful and to write down the values. Someone must lose over this transaction. It cannot be avoided. Whether it is the State Government or the Commonwealth Government that will lose, there must be a writing down of values for the soldier, otherwise he will start off with a rope round his neck.

**Mr. Duggan:** What do you think is the minimum living area there?

**Mr. SPARKES:** Somewhere about 1,000 acres in the best brigalow scrub, and an area very close to that on the Jimbour Plains. To my mind, the brigalow scrub and the Jimbour Plains are the two best classes of country in the Dalby district. Forest lands will cost from £3 to £5 an acre to clear, and that is no exaggeration. I can produce evidence to support that statement. That was the cost in a clearing job, not done by old-time methods but by two powerful crawler tractors pulling down during wet weather when other work could not be done. A rope was tied between the two tractors. By the time the land was cleaned up and burnt and properly stumped ready for the plough it cost from £3 to £5 an acre. Hon. members would understand what I am saying if they got alongside some of those trees and saw how big they were.

I am prepared to say that not one hon. member opposite or any else could remove even the one tree at a cost less than £5 and hon. members know about how many trees there are to the acre.

There is another aspect of this forest country that I want to stress. If the Minister will come to my district I can show him exactly what I mean and he, with his knowledge of the land and keenness to learn, will be able to understand. In that forest country the soil is mostly the lighter soil, as the hon. member for Dalby can tell you. In the lighter or sandy soil after the one ploughing or the one cultivation about 75 per cent. goes under couch grass, and once you get the couch grass in the lighter soil it is almost impossible to get it out.

**Mr. Hilton:** Then it is not good wheat-growing land.

**Mr. SPARKES:** It is not suitable for wheat-growing. It may be all right for a year or two for the growing of oats because you do not care whether it grows couch grass as well, but to grow wheat you must keep to the black-soil country. I should like the Minister to take a trip to this country. I am ever so happy to lend him my hearty co-operation and I am sure that the hon. member for Dalby would be happy to show him over his part of the electorate, which abuts mine. One of the virtues of the black-soil country is that it is not necessary to use superphosphates to grow the wonderful crops produced from it. Against that, hon. members opposite may say, and with perfect truth, that wheat is grown on much lighter soil in New South Wales. But New South Wales as a whole has a winter rainfall. The further south you go the greater the rainfall in the winter and the further north the greater the rainfall in summer. That fact plays a very important part in the production from the soil. In the south you can produce a crop on lighter soil without fertiliser and with no trouble from couch grass because couch is a summer grass and grows only with the summer rain. In our country, with the big summer rainfall, the couch grass becomes almost as great a pest as you could have.

**Mr. Collins:** How many sheep would a person need for fat-lamb-raising in conjunction with wheat?

**Mr. SPARKES:** One would perhaps get a good return from, say, 300, 400, or 500 ewes. There is another very important point to be considered, and I suppose it has given the Minister many sleepless nights. Not only is it important that there should be successful settlement of soldiers but what are they to do with the stuff when they grow it? I have no intention of trying to make any political gain out of what I am about to say.

**Mr. Walsh:** That is unusual.

**Mr. SPARKES:** It would be unusual if I did try to make political capital out of these matters. However, we were told that the sky was the limit in the growing of vegetables and I presume that the Director of Agriculture, Mr. Bulecock, was quite sincere when he urged the people to grow more vegetables. The appeal went out over the radio to grow more vegetables, to grow them in your back yard.

**Mr. Maher:** "Dig for Victory."

**Mr. SPARKES:** The vegetables are now rotting in the market. Probably people would go to the Minister and say, "Put men on the land to grow vegetables." Look at the chaos that we had at Theodore. We were going to grow a certain amount of produce at Theodore but we found that we had no market for it. That is why I mentioned wheat and fat lambs.

**Mr. Slessar:** What acreage would you suggest for fat lambs and wheat?

**Mr. SPARKES:** Nothing less than 1,000 acres. That would be just black-soil plain country.

**Mr. Collins:** How many acres would you reserve for wheat?

**Mr. SPARKES:** 400 or 500 acres, but I would farm as much as I could according to the area I held.

**Mr. Collins:** You must allow a certain area to fallow.

**Mr. SPARKES:** That is so, otherwise crops would suffer and we should introduce all the pests imaginable. To put that area under cultivation you would require a plant costing £4,000 to £5,000. How could a settler do it? That would capitalise his land as high as £5 or £6 an acre. If he cultivated 400 acres out of 1,000 acres he should make a good living out of fat-lamb-raising and wheat. One thing we must realise in connection with wheat is that its price, like the price of every other product, must go back. There is no doubt in the world about that. Today we are living in a fool's paradise so far as butter is concerned.

**Mr. Plunkett:** Leave butter out of it.

**Mr. SPARKES:** The hon. member for Albert says "Leave butter out of it" but we have to face up to possibilities.

**Mr. Collins:** He will tell you that we are living in a fool's paradise in relation to the price of beef.

**Mr. SPARKES:** I appreciate that fact. I realise that the price of all primary produce must come down.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr. SPARKES:** In any soldier-settlement scheme the present-day values of products must not alone be considered; we must look back and see what the pre-war price was. If we put more men on the land to produce more butter than every extra lb. of butter produced will probably reduce the price of that commodity.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order! I suggest to the hon. member that he must deal with the principles of this Bill. This Bill deals with land resumption, not with production.

**Mr. SPARKES:** I appreciate that but it is not proposed to resume land for the mere sake of resuming it; it is to be resumed for some purpose. I am trying to point out that it is utterly useless to put men on the land to grow a product that will be unsaleable or unprofitable.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order! As I have already suggested to the hon. member, he is discussing matters apart from the principles of the Bill altogether. I ask him to get back to the principles of the Bill.

**Mr. SPARKES:** I do not want to conflict with the Chair. I will endeavour to connect up my remarks with the principles of the Bill, but I do suggest that the settlement of

soldiers on the land is tied up with what they are likely to produce from that land.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order! That is certainly a phase of soldier settlement but not a phase of it covered by this Bill.

**Mr. SPARKES:** I thought this Bill was designed to give the Government power to acquire land for soldier settlement. That being so, this land would be acquired for a definite purpose. I am endeavouring to show that it would be ridiculous to acquire land to produce something that would not be a profitable investment for the soldier. The Minister must appreciate that point. He must know better than anyone in this House that it would be utterly useless to put men on the land to produce an article that cannot be sold. I am not endeavouring to forecast the Minister's intention but I do hope that if he visits certain areas that are blanketed he will encourage the intending settlers to go in for merino sheep. I am referring not to Dalby but to districts further out.

**Mr. Collins:** Did you say for merino sheep?

**Mr. SPARKES:** Definitely.

**Mr. Collins:** Only lamb-raising.

**Mr. SPARKES:** Yes, but with the merino ewes. I think there is no industry with a better or brighter outlook in Australia than the production of merino wool. It is the one industry that has a world's market. Despite all the artificial silks and other things, wool still is the world's key article for the production of certain textile goods. There is no other article in production in this State that is wanted by the world that the world cannot produce in large quantities itself. That is why I say the Minister probably will find that his most successful settlement will be in the areas where the sheep plays a very big and important part.

I commend the Bill. Anything that I can do in my own district to help the Minister I shall be only too happy to do.

**Mr. MORRIS (Enoggera) (3.22 p.m.):** Because of our appreciation of the urgent need in Queensland for increased population it was extremely pleasing to me to hear the Minister draw attention to the fact that he expected probably 60 per cent. of the applicants for land under this scheme would be from men from southern States. We Queenslanders agree very fully with the statement made by the Prime Minister the other day, that Queensland had greater potentialities than any other State in Australia. Even if this war has done nothing else for Queensland it has brought to the attention of the people in the southern States the great potentialities of Queensland, and it will, we hope, bring to Queensland many southerners who are discharged from the forces.

At 3.23 p.m.,

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

**Mr. MORRIS:** The Bill is one to acquire and not to sell, and it is on the basis of the power to acquire land that I wish to speak. The Leader of the Opposition laid down a series of principles on which the acquisition of the land should be based, with which I agree in the main; in fact, I agree with them altogether. There was one angle that he mentioned in passing, however. He made the statement "Don't take one settler off the land just to put another one on," to which the Minister replied that he had no intention whatever of doing that. There is one fault I have with the Bill, and that is that it gives an unlimited right to acquire land within the purposes of the Bill, that is, the Minister has absolute power to acquire any land in any part of Queensland under any conditions, so long as it is going to be used to settle returned soldiers on the land. Without in any way wishing to cast any aspersion on the Minister, I feel that the power granted under the Bill is much too wide and much too sweeping. I have every confidence that the Minister will carry out the principle he has laid down and that he will never put one settler off the land to put another settler on, the last settler being a returned soldier. I do not think it is fair to the legislature of this State or fair to the Minister or the people living in the State that almost unlimited powers should be within the hands of any Minister. I believe the Bill would be improved if a limitation was imposed—a slight one, at all events.

**Mr. Hilton:** What sort of limitation?

**Mr. MORRIS:** This is how I believe the limitation should be applied. First of all, the principle could be laid down that no overall purpose should be incorporated in the Bill to remove one settler to settle another settler unless it is for the purpose, first, of obtaining denser and more satisfactory settlement, or, secondly, of obtaining the more effective use of the land than has been obtained up to the present.

**Mr. Walsh:** You might have to do that to make a complete design. You might have one 6,000-acre property in the midst of a number of 10,000-acre properties.

**Mr. MORRIS:** I quite appreciate that point but a limitation should be in the Bill. At present it is a bit too sweeping.

Another limitation could with justice be included in the Bill. I am not saying that the Minister would put the provision into operation, but as the Bill is drafted it is within the power of the Minister to remove from any land whatsoever in Queensland a returned soldier of the last war and settle in his place a returned soldier of this war. Nobody can argue that that is not possible under the Bill. It is not likely with the present Minister in charge but there is that possibility and the legislation is not correct if that possibility exists. I feel that with a slight tightening up of the Bill that danger can be removed. There should be absolute protection to any returned soldier from the last war, on the condition of course that he is using the whole of his land for a useful

purpose. I admit there may be returned soldiers of the last war who are holding 100, 200, or 500 acres but using only half to good purpose. Of course, the part not being used by such a returned soldier should be available for acquisition. The principle, firstly, of absolute protection for the returned soldier of the last war if his land is sufficient or, secondly, a limited protection to such returned soldier if his land is more than sufficient should be introduced into the Bill.

Another principle that should be incorporated in the Bill deals with the rentals to be paid by these soldiers taking over land under perpetual leasehold.

**Mr. Jones:** That is dealt with in another Bill to be brought down.

**Mr. MORRIS:** It definitely is in that Bill and in that case I will leave it at that. I hope that the possibility will be completely covered.

**Mr. THEODORE (Herbert) (3.28 p.m.):** It has already been pointed out that it is generally recognised that this Bill presents the Government and the Minister with a tremendous problem. No-one can discount the difficulties that confront them in giving effect to this very important and necessary measure. As might be expected, after the lucid explanation given by the Minister, the Bill has been generally very well received. I am very pleased at the reception given to it. There are certain provisions in it, of course, that some hon. members feel will hurt someone, but I do not think any great injustice will be done to anyone. We all realise that we must do the right thing by the ex-service-men and this measure is brought down specifically for seeing that the right thing is done when settling returned soldiers on the land and that every favourable condition will exist for making the schemes that will be brought into effect by the provisions of this measure a great success. However, we must avoid the mistakes that followed the last war.

If mistakes are made—and they will be—and these mistakes are caused through no fault of the soldier settler, then those responsible for the mistakes should be made to suffer the consequences. If we put men into certain positions to do work on behalf of the returned soldiers, as we did after the last war, and they make mistakes—and sometimes deliberately make them—they should be made to suffer. After the last war there were instances in which people connived to make available for resale to returned soldiers certain land at high prices. There is no doubt that there are among us men who would stoop to these practices, and anyone indulging in such practices should be charged criminally. The Minister has been extremely careful to prepare the Bill in such a way as to prevent that sort of thing.

It is obvious that some delay in implementing the measure will necessarily take place. Both the Government and the Minister realise that you cannot go bullheaded into a thing like this because it is vital to the

future of those men who have rendered great service to their country. Even if the need for care occasions delay that is desirable if it will ensure that the scheme is not doomed to failure because of hasty legislation.

Many things have to be considered when placing men on the land. It is important, for instance, to ensure that the area on which a soldier is settled is of suitable size to enable a decent living to be made from the kind of agriculture in which he is engaged. The sizes of these areas should be determined by men who have practical knowledge of each district and its requirements. I know there is a tendency for some to suggest that the areas should be larger than is necessary to return a reasonable living, but that too is a fault. The former Secretary for Public Lands will know that on various occasions I have made representations on behalf of people in my area who say that their blocks should be increased, that they cannot derive a reasonable living from their present areas. Some of them are dairy farmers.

When we investigate the position we find they are not utilising their blocks to the fullest extent. Therefore, there is no merit in making blocks too large, with the result that land lies idle.

Another thing to which regard must be paid in the settlement of returned soldiers is the prospect of the success of the intended undertaking. The causes of failure are many and varied. Many farmers have failed through causes over which they have had no control. The experience in the past has been that men have taken up land in areas where the land was good and the prospects appeared excellent in every way. However, misfortune has overtaken them in some form or another. Men have failed because of successive droughts, or because of diseases in their crops, or because of gluts on the market.

Every care should be taken to see that irrigation is provided for these men wherever possible. It will be one of the tragedies of this war if returned soldiers are settled on land in areas subject to droughts without some provision for irrigation. I am not saying that that will be done deliberately, but droughts may occur and if no means of coping with them is provided, failure and disaster must follow. Therefore, I am glad to know that some consideration is being given to irrigation in areas that have not an assured rainfall.

I have received many inquiries from ex-servicemen who wish to get an early start on the land. These men are land-minded. Many of them are farmers' sons but unfortunately their parents' farms are too small to allow of their taking part of them with any hope of making reasonable livings. They wish to establish themselves on the land as soon as possible. Although those men have had a lifelong experience of farming, they would have no chance whatever of establishing themselves on the land without a long delay if it were not for the opportunity that is being afforded by this Bill. This Bill gives an opportunity for those men, who

would otherwise have to wait for probably 18 months or two years before receiving assistance under the Commonwealth-States scheme.

At 3.40 p.m.,

Mr. SPEAKER resumed the chair.

**Mr. THEODORE:** The Bill is a very commendable one, and it will result in the establishment of a large number of men on the land before the Commonwealth Act actually comes into operation. There are many men, apart from those experienced in land matters, who are eager to go on the land. Many of them from the southern States have a great admiration for Queensland. They have visited the State and they have expressed a wish to settle here. I know of quite a number who have established themselves by their own efforts in North Queensland. That happens in a few cases, but in the majority it would be courting disaster to put men on the land without giving them some guidance in land occupation. Therefore, provision is made to teach the prospective settlers what is required to enable them to gain a livelihood from the land.

Another very important feature of the Bill is that it protects the prospective soldier settler from the over-capitalisation of his holding. It would be disastrous, if, after having gone through the early stages of preparing the land, the settler should find that he was over-burdened with a financial responsibility from which he had no hope of escaping.

In order to ensure the success of these settlers, too, it will be necessary to make available to them the advice of practical men. I was particularly interested to hear the views of the hon. member for Aubigny concerning his area, of which he has a very intimate knowledge. I have no knowledge of those areas because the whole of my farming operations have been confined to a totally different form of agriculture in North Queensland. Many people have an altogether wrong idea of what is entailed in the clearing and preparing of land for agricultural pursuits. It would cost anything from £50 to £60 an acre to clear scrub land in North Queensland and put it into a condition ready for the plough. The methods usually adopted by people settling in North Queensland are to produce crops that can be grown between the tree-stumps for say four or five years, after which time it is a comparatively easy matter to clear the land with the machinery and appliances that have been introduced here by the Americans during the war. That will enable the job of establishing returned soldiers on farm lands to be carried out as easily and as cheaply as possible.

The care that will be exercised by the Government in their attempt to do the utmost to make a success of the scheme for settling returned soldiers on the land will meet with the approval of the whole of the people in Queensland. I am sure that the Bill will have the support of every hon. member as well.

**Mr. PLUNKETT (Albert) (3.45 p.m.):** This Bill is a very important one, partly because it must harmonise with Commonwealth legislation and partly because it deals with the very important subject of settling returned soldiers on the land. It is one that we can all agree with and discuss without any political bias. There is a responsibility on this Parliament not only to do all it possibly can for the success of this scheme but to offer suggestions to make it workable. That is what everyone wishes. Nevertheless, no Bill with such a purpose has ever been introduced that is surrounded by so many problems. The land must be acquired, the men must be selected and placed on it under conditions that will give them a reasonable chance of success in whatever district the scheme may be launched. That immediately forces one to face up to such issues as the quality of the land, the quantity of the land and its possibilities—what can be grown on it successfully. As a last resort we must consider what value can be obtained for the products grown. All these questions affect the welfare of new settlers.

**Mr. Devries:** And the wealth of the State, too.

**Mr. PLUNKETT:** It is very difficult to pass legislation with such an object because we all desire to give every new settler an equal opportunity. To do that by legislation is almost an impossibility, particularly when we do not know what the land is capable of producing, its capacity, or what will be the value of the products.

We are faced with the question of doing something for people to whom we are under the deepest debt of gratitude. In order to give them an opportunity to make up for the time they lost in defending this country in our interests, and in small measure their own too. The obligation is on us therefore to see that they get a better spin than the rest of the community who have not earned that consideration. That requires us to be rather on the generous than the niggardly side. Some soldier settlers may have some finance to equip them for their future, but some may have none. We are thus faced with the position of not only acquiring the necessary land but of financing these men. It is difficult to get the necessary land.

Then we have two or three different classes of tenure. We have the freehold tenure, the leasehold tenure, and the perpetual leasehold tenure. Unfortunately we have very little suitable Crown land available for the purposes of this Bill. We must consider the possibility too that this scheme may induce men from other States to come to Queensland. Provision must be made for them as well as for our own soldiers. Above all, this legislation must harmonise with that of the Commonwealth, whose proposal is that the returned men shall be placed on ready-made farms. That is to say, we are to say to these men, "Here is your opportunity; there is a farm; go on it and make a living." The problem of making a ready-made farm

is one of the most difficult we shall be called upon to face.

A ready-made farm that was handed over to me, for instance, might not be as attractive to me as it might be to somebody else with a different outlook. There is also the possibility of over-capitalising the land to such an extent that the settler may never be able to redeem it.

We must be very careful in these matters. If we are to have a reasonable chance of success with this venture of soldier settlement we should concern ourselves only with the best land in Queensland, that is, land within areas that are not isolated. These men have been isolated for some time now and it would be detrimental to settle them in isolated places. All they want to do is to get back into harness. If there are going to be delays owing to the work of making ready-made farms that will be very detrimental to the whole scheme. We all know how difficult it is to get a house built, let alone create a ready-made farm, which means not only building a house but erecting farm buildings and procuring equipment. When we realise how difficult it is to build a house in the city we can appreciate how much more difficult it would be and how much delay would occur in creating ready-made farms in country areas where there is perhaps no transport. These are things that nobody can help but we should not tell the men that we are going to give them ready-made farms and lead people to believe that they will be ready in one, or two or three months, or three years if it cannot be done, because it would be misleading and they would be hanging about all the time waiting.

It is no good harping on what happened last time; we can profit by the mistakes that were made after the last war. Some of the failures were attributable to the poor land, therefore the first essential for success is the best land. Another problem for the Government is to ascertain what the land is best suited for. It is no use going in for dairying in a wheat district or if the land is otherwise not suitable for it. All these things have to be considered. It is often difficult to convince people that your advice is right. Different-sized areas will be needed in different parts of Queensland. The size of the area depends entirely on what the area is used for, in what district and what rainfall there is and what the soil survey shows. Obtaining this information causes delay. Moreover, I know many farmers who have failed after years of hard work because they over-capitalised their farms.

I hope these ready-made farms will not be over-capitalised farms. Much depends on the meaning of ready-made farms. If we can get one successful farmer he will be worth more to the State than six failures.

Another matter that will arise—and we should not be one-eyed about this—is the tenure of the land. A man with capital may want freehold land. He should have the option to acquire the land on a freehold basis. Moreover, if he takes on a leasehold tenure he should have the opportunity to

make that land freehold when he has the funds available. We must look at this thing with a broad national outlook. Different people have different ideas in regard to tenure but nobody can tell me that the man who is more likely to make a success on the land is not the man who owns the property or feels that he does so.

We must also give serious consideration to the implementation of the Bills of all the States and the Commonwealth Bill. The scheme is more likely to fail from the delay in putting it into effect than from the generosity of the provisions of the Bill. Soldiers have already returned and although we have talked for years about doing something to provide land on which they could settle on their return it is still unavailable. Some of these men are looking for land. They are asking for it. Why, the hon. member for Carnarvon mentioned this morning that he had 60 applications from men who wanted to get on the land. That state of things prevails generally. These men were led to believe that land would be available to them. Men from other industries have decided to go on the land but they find they cannot get the land for one, two or three years. Under this Bill the Minister will have power to acquire and develop land and to do many necessary things, but we must avoid delay. The people throughout Australia realise their obligation to their soldiers and this Bill is welcomed in all the States of the Commonwealth but we must avoid delay. If the power existed I would contend that negotiations should be entered into to get the land now. There should be no waiting until we unravel all the red tape. I would urge that we go out now and get the land. One way of doing this would be to get it from men who are willing to sell. If it is necessary to have ready-made farms, go out and buy farms already made. A number of people have been working to hold their lands for their sons but unfortunately these sons will never return.

**Mr. Collins:** Take one off and put another man on?

**Mr. PLUNKETT:** Why wait until ready-made farms are made if they can be acquired on an equitable basis now?

**Mr. Williams:** What would you do with the man displaced?

**Mr. Macdonald:** He has been killed.

**Mr. PLUNKETT:** I do not know how many of these farms could be bought but the information could soon be obtained if it was sought. I am pointing out that this Bill means one thing but the delay means a different thing altogether. These returning soldiers have to live somewhere somehow. If we continue telling them that we are not ready for them what are they to do till we are? They cannot be allowed to starve.

We must consider what it is worth to Australia to develop our country lands. Even though it may mean a few losses, it is far better to get on with the job at once

and risk those losses because the advantage to the State and the Commonwealth if it is successful will be tremendous. It is better to suffer a loss than to do nothing at all for these men. In order to save delay I suggest that instead of making the men wait until we have ready-made farms we put them on the land, let them feel that the land is going to be theirs, let them develop it in the way in which they wish it to be developed, and pay them for their work while the place is being developed. In the old days two or three men would get together and help one another to develop their properties. This could be done again, and we could pay them for their work. We must avoid delay at all costs.

**Mr. Jones:** The idea of the Bill is to obviate delay by expediting the acquisition of land.

**Mr. PLUNKETT:** I know that the intention of the Bill is good and I welcome it so much that I urge that the Government hurry through with it and put these men on the land. This is a serious matter. If any soldier has decided to get married and go on the land but is delayed because he cannot get land he may be inclined to take up some other occupation and this may prove detrimental to both himself and the State. Let us cut through any delays, let us implement the Bill immediately and rectify any difficulties that may arise under the Commonwealth legislation later. Speed is essential. I support the Bill, but for God's sake, speed up its implementation.

Debate, on motion of Mr. Collins, adjourned.

The House adjourned at 4.5 p.m.