

**Legislative Council.***Thursday, 23 October, 1947.*

Assent to Bills—Leave of Absence—Member Resigned—Vacancy—Writ for Election—First Readings—Closer Settlement: Acquisition of Estates—Land Settlement: Purchase of Estates—Special Adjournment.

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 p.m.

The opening Prayer was read.

**ASSENT TO BILLS.**

Royal Assent to the following bills reported:

Supply Bill.

Economic Stability and Wartime Provisions Continuance (Amendment) Bill.

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE.**

The PRESIDENT announced that he had received a communication from his Excellency the Governor, dated 3rd October, 1947, intimating that leave of absence had been granted to the Hon. S. E. Parry, M.L.C., during the present session of Parliament.

**MEMBER RESIGNED.**

The PRESIDENT reported the receipt of a communication from his Excellency the Governor, dated 16th October, 1947, intimating that he had received a letter from the Hon. Francis Daniel Kelly, tendering his resignation as a member of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, to take effect on and from the 15th October, 1947. An entry recording his resignation on the 15th October, 1947, had been duly made in the register of members of the Legislative Council.

**VACANCY.**

The PRESIDENT announced that, in accordance with the provisions of the eighth section of the Constitution (Legislative Council Elections) Act, 1932-1937, he had notified his Excellency the Governor on the 16th October, 1947, that the seat of the Hon. Francis Daniel Kelly had, through resignation, become vacant on the 15th October, 1947, before the expiration of his term

of service, which notification was duly acknowledged by His Excellency on the 16th October, 1947.

**WRIT FOR ELECTION.**

The PRESIDENT reported the receipt of a message from the Governor intimating that, on the advice of the Legislative Council, he had issued a writ for the election of a member of the Legislative Council to fill a vacancy caused by the resignation of the Hon. Francis Daniel Kelly.

Writ read by the Clerk.

The PRESIDENT directed that the taking of the votes of members in the Legislative Council for the election of a member to the Council be set down as an order of the day for the day of the ballot appointed in the writ mentioned in his Excellency's message, namely, the eleventh day of November, 1947, and intimated that on such day the taking of the votes would take precedence of all other business.

**FIRST READINGS.**

The following bills were received from the Legislative Assembly and read at first time:—

Co-operation (Further Amendment) Bill.

Police Regulation (Appeals) Amendment Bill.

**CLOSER SETTLEMENT: ACQUISITION OF ESTATES:**

The Hon. R. R. DOWNING (Minister of Justice and Vice-President of the Executive Council) [4.47]: I move:

That pursuant and subject to the provisions of the Closer Settlement Acts, this House approves of the Governor resuming from the owners the private lands comprised in the following estates:—

- (a) Coree Park Estate, owned by Michael Lawrence Forrest and the estate of Richard Terence Forrest, deceased, situated between Finley and Jerilderie, comprising an area of about 5,367 acres.
- (b) Grimer Downs Estate, owned by the executor of the will of Alexander Philip, deceased, situated between Barham and Wakool, comprising an area of about 5,778 acres.
- (c) Part Kenyu Estate, owned by Kenyu Pastoral Company Proprietary Limited, situated near Boorowa, comprising an area of about 8,583 acres.

- (d) Murphy's Estate, owned by the executrix of the will of John Widdis, deceased; Charles Arthur Widdis and executors of will of George Martley Davis, deceased; situated near Moulamein, comprising an area of about 3,583 acres.
- (e) Maragle Estate, owned by Maragle Pastoral Company Proprietary Limited, situated near Tooma and Tumbarumba, comprising an area of about 14,320 acres.
- (f) Part Nangus Estate, owned by Nangus Pastoral Company Proprietary Limited, situated near Gundagai, comprising, an area of about 5,891 acres.
- (g) Tintaldra Estate, owned by Tintaldra Proprietary Limited, situated in the Upper Murray district about thirty miles from Tumbarumba, comprising an area of about 3,006 acres.

Hon. members will recollect that on the motion for the adjournment of the House on the last day of meeting, I intimated that copies of the Closer Settlement Advisory Boards' reports, together with maps, would be available for the information of hon. members, prior to my moving this and the other similar motion on the business paper. These reports are still available, and following the usual custom, maps of the estates are available in the Chamber for inspection by hon. members. The Advisory Boards' reports that have been supplied for the use of hon. members contain detailed information in respect of each of the properties referred to in the motion, and the maps show the approximate position of all the improvements on those estates, together with classifications and descriptions of the land embraced in each of them. These properties have been the subject of inspection by Commonwealth and State authorities and are considered suitable in all respects for soldier settlement. I do not propose to deal in detail with the Advisory Board's reports respecting each of the properties, but if further information not contained in the reports is desired I shall be happy to supply it. A perusal of the reports will convince hon. members that the properties are eminently suitable for soldier settlement and I therefore commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. A. A. ALAM [4.52] I should like the Minister to say whether it is possible to eliminate the overlapping between the Federal and State authorities and thus expedite the acquisition of properties for soldier settlement purposes. Under the present system Mr. Dedman, an excellent Federal administrator, and Mr. Sheahan, a competent State Minister, exercise a dual control, and one department is everlastingly waiting upon the other for determinations regarding price, suitability and so on. Perhaps the Premier and the Prime Minister could arrive at a formula that would satisfactorily overcome this difficulty. It might be possible to vest the power in the Federal Minister or perhaps it would be preferable to hand to the Minister for Lands in each State the sole right of determination in these matters. It is imperative that authority should be delegated to one department. Valuable time is wasted, sometimes up to two and three years, in the acquisition of estates.

The State is better equipped to control land purchases because the Lands Departments in the various States have a closer and better knowledge of conditions than the Federal authorities, who are largely guided by the representations of State Ministers. These matters could be handled much more expeditiously if the necessary power were vested in the Minister for Lands in each State. If this were done many more properties would be offered for closer settlement. I appreciate that the Prime Minister is an extremely busy person, but this matter is of the utmost importance. The State Government is the subject of unjust criticism respecting delays that occur in soldier settlement. I assure the House that the Government is working day and night to expedite acquisitions, that it has 100 per cent. sympathy for ex-servicemen and that it wants to place them on the land. I have always been a strong supporter of settlement on single farm units. That is not closer settlement but soldier settlement. If power is given to the Minister to allocate single farms there will be a great advance in soldier settlement.

I know the estates, the purchase of which is the subject of the motion now before the House. They have been extremely well bought and each one has been offered to the Government at the sacrifice of the owner. The vendor has sold to the Government at a price below market value, in one case the property, if offered on an open competitive market, would bring almost double the price at which it is being acquired. We cannot expect that to continue. Owners will not sell for £3 15s. 0d. and £4 an acre land worth £6 and £7 as they are doing to-day. We must at all costs avoid the debacle of the soldier settlement scheme that followed World War I, when fortunes were made by racketeers who boosted up the price of £3 land to £5 and £6 an acre. Under the present system that would be impossible, but the Government will have to consider the equity of giving owners a fair and reasonable price.

I know a property on Tomingley-road between Dubbo and Peak Hill. The owners, who had previously been offered £3 16s. 8d. an acre privately, submitted the estate to the authorities for acquisition for soldier settlement purposes. The board, which does excellent work, but is inclined to be too conservative in its prices, inspected the property and offered £2 8s. 6d. an acre. That farm is highly improved, all fenced, subdivided into sixteen paddocks with water in each; it has an excellent home and the only timber on the place is necessary for shade. It is a beautiful property and I should not like to think that I had worked hard and brought it to its present state of productivity only to be offered a price of £2 8s. 6d. an acre. If it were only a few shillings below market value it would not matter, but when there is a difference of £1 an acre the disparity is too great. No doubt there are cases where the owner has sought a price that is too high but the private offer for the Tomingley-road property was the ruling price in the district. We must devise means by which we can achieve expedition and avoid racketeering. To-day our policy on land prices is one of extreme

conservatism. Though not wishing to appear unduly optimistic, I aver that with ruling wheat and wool prices it is ridiculous to expect farmers who possess highly productive land to sacrifice it for soldier settlement at a price much below market value. If the Government considers that present prices will last beyond another five or seven years it must alter its policy. I agree that it is wise to look ahead and I must confess that present prices are only temporary. I was reared in the country and I appreciate the wisdom of this policy. We must look ahead for the next ten or fifteen years, but viewing it from the business point of view it seems to me that while prices will not remain as buoyant as they are to-day they will remain at a good level for the next seven years at least. Until the rest of the world is stabilised I cannot see the price of wheat dropping below 6s. 9d. a bushel or the price of wool dropping below 13d. a lb. On the basis of those prices, the Board advising the Minister for Lands should be a little more liberal in the prices that it is offering for farms on which to settle ex-servicemen.

The Government has been criticised for the small number of returned servicemen it has placed on the land. That is unjust. If the blame were placed on the farmers, that would be justified, because returned servicemen cannot be settled on farms unless the owners make their properties available. How can the Government place settlers on the land if the owners will not sell their properties? I know many farms the owners of which would willingly make them available for soldier settlement if the Government would pay them a fair and reasonable price, and that is a matter that the Minister should consider when he is conferring with the Minister for Lands. I do not suggest that they should override the Board, Mr. M. Allen and his colleagues, but I think that if the Board were more lenient it would go a long way to assist in solving the problem. The properties under consideration are extremely good value at the prices proposed to be paid for them,

and they are being made available only by the sacrifices of the owners. I can safely say that if any of these properties were submitted for sale at public auction they would bring at least twenty per cent. more than it is proposed to pay for them. I should not be surprised if they realised a fifty per cent. higher price at auction.

The other night I referred to the shortage of bags for wheat. I have just completed a long trip in the country, during which I visited Dunedoo, Gulgong, Leadville and other places. Except in 1919-20, I have never seen crops so luxurious as they are to-day. The speech that I made the other day was misconstrued in several country newspapers. At no time did I mean to impugn the efficiency of the Australian Wheat Board. I publicly thank and commend Mr. J. Perrett and his colleagues for the highly meritorious work that the Australian Wheat Board not only is doing now but also did throughout the war period. It would be foolish for me to criticise the members of the Board when the fault is not theirs. Mr. Perrett has been in constant touch with the Commonwealth Government. Last March he saw that there would be a good season, and that our bag position was precarious. He was in close contact with Mr. Pollard and Mr. Chifley. He worked day and night, and the position as to bags would have been very precarious but for his application to duty. He did everything possible to procure all the bags necessary, but even in his most optimistic calculations he did not dream that there would be an average crop of ten or twelve bags of wheat to the acre, and that some crops would average fourteen bags to the acre. I should like to congratulate our colleague, the Hon. Mr. Horne, upon one of the most beautiful crops that I have ever seen. It was grown by his sons at Leadville. I am a bad judge if the crop does not average twelve bags to the acre. I do not know whether he has sufficient bags.

As soon as it appeared likely that there would be a bumper season, the Australian Wheat Board kept in constant touch with the Federal Government. I have been in touch with the Trade Commissioner for India to obtain his views. More corn sacks are required, but Pakistan and India cannot be accused of being mercenary. It is a matter of self-preservation. They desire to save the lives of their people, who are dying in the streets from malnutrition and starvation. The position in those countries is very serious, and they want all the wheat that they can get. They have a worthwhile commodity with which to bargain—corn sacks.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member is getting a little wide of the subject. The motion is for the resumption of certain estates, and I ask him to confine his remarks to the motion.

The Hon. A. A. ALAM: I bow to your ruling, Mr. President, but suggest that the position with regard to corn sacks is related to the purchase of these properties. We must endeavour to ensure that we shall not be short of bags in the future. I believe that the Australian Wheat Board should remain in control and that there should be a unified national policy instead of private enterprise buying and bartering as it did previously.

The growers and the people are getting value for every penny spent on the Australian Wheat Board, and I hope that it will never be abolished. Year in and year out the growers will find that they get the fullest value for their produce, and if the Board were abolished there would be chaos. The question might be asked, "Why are we in such a position so far as corn sacks are concerned?" The crop is abundant and we should do everything in our power to avoid the wastage of even one grain of wheat. Let the farmers do what was done in 1920. Let them pour the wheat into squares formed of filled bags two or three high, stayed at the top with wire and propped with wood. The bottom is, of course, strewn with hay. The wheat in the squares will last for four, five,

or six months, especially if it is covered with tarpaulins or is in a tin shed. Some wheat on the bottom may become damp, but it is astounding how much wheat can be stored in that way. The farmers should adopt that system until bags are obtainable from India, with which country negotiations are now taking place. If the farmers cut hay into bundles, build them to the requisite height round an enclosure then bind them with wire, an improvised silo can be made. The wheat can then be poured into the prepared space. The wheat will be protected, and the farmers will avoid the necessity of building an expensive permanent silo. This method was adopted in 1920, when there was a bumper harvest, and I am prepared to rely upon the ingenuity of the farmers to provide storage facilities on the farms. If this method is adopted, it will overcome the existing shortage of wheat sacks, and enable storage to be carried out until additional supplies of jute arrive.

Respecting the criticism of my recent speech, I should like to make my position clear. I did not, by word or thought, criticise the Australian Wheat Board. On the other hand, I congratulate and compliment the work of Mr. Perrett and his colleagues who are doing a meritorious work of national importance.

The Hon. Sir GRAHAM WADDELL: [5.11]: I ask the Minister whether he can state the reason for the delay that has occurred in the subdivision of Merri-bindiyah Estate, and the settlement of ex-servicemen on that property? I am informed that no fewer than three surveyors have surveyed the area that was supposed to have been subdivided for soldier settlement two years ago. However, nothing has been done in the matter.

The Hon. 'R. R. 'DOWNING (Minister of Justice and Vice-President of the Executive Council) [5.12], in reply: Delays that have occurred in settling ex-servicemen on the land generally may be due to the fact that these acquisitions are awaiting the concur-

rence of the Commonwealth authorities, or to necessary administrative action. I assure the Hon. Mr. Alam that the acquisition of these estates has given the present Minister for Lands, Mr. Sheahan, and his predecessor, Mr. Tully, a great deal of concern. The State has a financial responsibility for the expenditure of money for the purchase of estates, and the Commonwealth also shares in certain outgoings that are associated with the settlement of ex-servicemen. This matter has been taken up by the Minister for Lands recently, and it is hoped that as a result of his discussion with the Commonwealth authorities, the acquisition of these estates will be considerably expedited. The price paid for the land, which, it is suggested by the hon. member, is in some cases too low, is governed by the provisions of the Act which prescribe that estates are to be acquired at the valuation existing on 10th February, 1942. In the event of a dispute as to valuation, that dispute is determined by the Land and Valuation Court. The price of the estates under discussion has been tentatively agreed upon by the Closer Settlement Advisory Board and the owners. In the reports of the Closer Settlement Advisory Board it is disclosed that there is a maximum amount beyond which the owners have agreed not to claim in respect of these resumptions. Referring to the Coree Park Estate, the board stated that the owners had agreed to the resumption of the whole of the area at an approved price of £7 an acre on a freehold basis. It is not expected that there will be protracted court proceedings in determining the value of the estate. The Hon. Mr. Alam referred to the wheat sack position. In reply, I assure him that at his request I have already taken up that matter with the Commonwealth authorities. With regard to the Merri-bindiyah Estate, referred to by the Hon. Sir Graham Waddell, I understand there has been some delay in the settlement of ex-servicemen on the subdivided farms on that estate. But it is not expected that there will be any further difficulty. I will take up the matter with the Minister, and by correspondence I

may be able to give the hon. member more detailed information as to the cause of the prolonged delay to which he has referred.

Motion agreed to.

#### CLOSER SETTLEMENT: ACQUISITION OF ESTATES.

The Hon. R. R. DOWNING (Minister of Justice and Vice-President of the Executive Council) [5.17]: I move:

That pursuant and subject to the provisions of the Closer Settlement Acts, this House approves of the Governor purchasing, by agreements with the owners, the private lands comprised in the following estates at the prices stated:—

- (a) Part Europambela Estate, owned by Europambela Grazing Company (Proprietary Limited, situated near Walcha, comprising an area of about 6,920 acres at the rate of £4 4s. 0d. per acre on a freehold basis.
- (b) Part Roachdale Estate, owned by David James Roach, situated near Holbrook, comprising an area of about 5,162 acres at the rate of £7 18s. 8d. per acre on a freehold basis.
- (c) Part Wallington Estate, owned by the Estate of the late Arthur Thomas Fenwick, situated near Walcha, comprising about 4,570 acres at the rate of £4 per acre on a freehold basis.

It is proposed to acquire these estates by way of purchase, as distinct from resumption, agreement having been arrived at with the owners as to the price to be paid. As in the case of the estates, with which the House has just dealt, copies of the Closer Settlement Advisory Board's reports have been available to hon. members for the last month, and maps have been prepared showing the approximate position of the improvements. These properties have been investigated by experts, Commonwealth and State, and they are considered to be suitable for closer settlement. The properties are described in detail in the report; and the maps reveal the improvements. Subject to any further information hon. members may require, I do not propose to refer at length to the matters mentioned in the board's reports.

The Hon. A. A. ALAM [5.18]: I ask the Minister what the Government proposes to do in regard to the acquisition for soldier settlement of Borambil Estate in the Condobolin district. There are 7,000 acres available for acquisition close to the township. When the matter was considered, the chairman of the Closer Settlement Advisory Board, Mr. A. Max Allen, said that 2,500 acres would not provide a living area. I agree with him because it is certainly a precarious district. I have since discussed the matter with Mr. Brown and Mr. Metcalfe, both of whom agree that between 3,000 and 4,000 acres would provide a living area. I appeal to the Minister to arrange for the acquisition of the estate, which should provide adequate living areas for no fewer than eighteen ex-servicemen. I agree that certain properties have a sentimental value, and that the owners should not be exploited. Many estates have been fully developed for the production of wheat and the raising of sheep and cattle, but the Borambil Estate is owned by two elderly ladies, who own flats at Manly. They are running only a few thousand sheep on Borambil. The owners are extremely wealthy and there are no other members of the family. I feel sure that if the authorities were to offer a reasonable price, instead of endeavouring to cut them down to £1 an acre less than they want, it would be possible to acquire this beautiful property. I could name eight or twelve other properties equally good that are not being used to the fullest extent. The Government should not overlook these opportunities of acquiring properties of 70,000 or 80,000 acres of good land going right to the boundary of a township, but should move towards their compulsory resumption. The need for land is great. I hope that the Minister, when he is inquiring further into the resumption of Borambil, will ask Mr. Max Allen whether he would recommend it if that estate were subdivided into 4,000 acres blocks instead of blocks of 2,500 acres.

The Hon. R. R. DOWNING (Minister of Justice and Vice-President of the Executive Council) [5.21], in reply: Although the department and the Closer Settlement Boards prefer to arrive at an agreement with the owners as to the price, failing such agreement there is ample power for the compulsory acquisition of those estates at a price determined by the Land and Valuation Court, subject to the provisions of the Act which determine the date as at which valuation is to be fixed. On 30th July this year the Director of the Commonwealth War Service Land Settlement Division intimated that his department was not willing to depart from its previous decision to reject the estate as an area for soldier settlement. Mr. McLaren informed Mr. Allen that he had received representations made by the Condobolin District Land Advisory Committee and that he had given careful consideration to them and agreed with the view of No. 1 Closer Settlement Advisory Board that the representations were on a very optimistic note. He was of opinion that there was nothing in those further representations to warrant a departure from his decision conveyed on 29th July, 1946, to Mr. Allen, to the effect that the Commonwealth considered the estate unsuitable for purposes of War Service Land Settlement. The Hon. Mr. Alam will be aware that in accordance with the agreement entered into between the Commonwealth and the State, both authorities must concur before an estate can be acquired for soldier settlement purposes. The hon. member will see, from the correspondence to which I have referred, that the estate has been considered and is deemed unsuitable by the authorities. I ask the House to approve of the arrangement made in respect of the estates referred to in the motion.

Motion agreed to.

#### SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT.

Motion (by the Hon. R. R. Downing) agreed to.

That this House, at its rising to-day, do adjourn until Tuesday next.

House adjourned at 5.24 p.m.

## Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 23 October, 1947.

Questions without Notice—Police Regulation (Appeals) Amendment Bill—Local Government (Areas) Bill (second reading)—Housing (Amendment) Bill—Legislative Council Vacancy (Writ for Election)—Adjournment (Racing Control).

Mr. SPEAKER took the Chair at 11 a.m.  
The opening Prayer was read.

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE.

#### YANCO AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOL.

Mr. ENTICKNAP: I ask the Minister for Education whether it is a fact that continued representations have been made to him regarding the inadequate staff accommodation at the Yanco Agricultural High School? If this is a fact, can the Minister inform hon. members whether anything has been done in the matter, and when relief may be expected?

Mr. HEFFRON: Difficulty has been experienced in providing accommodation for the staff of the Yanco High School, mainly because of the unfortunate fire that occurred there some time ago. It has been impossible to carry out the original intention of the Government to erect permanent buildings at once, but in the meantime buildings have been obtained from the Disposals Commission and their conversion for staff use will probably begin next week. A need also exists for a residence for the Deputy Principal, and I have directed that the necessary plans be sent to Yanco in the hope that a local builder will submit a tender and expedite its completion. Let me say, in conclusion, that the Principal is very satisfied with what the Government is doing at the college.

#### BUILDING MATERIALS: QUOTA SCHEME.

Mr. DRUMMOND: I ask the Minister for Building Materials and Supply whether his attention has been drawn to a press statement, attributed to a leading figure in the iron and steel industry,