

must face up to the solution of the North-West Mallee problem. That country will never be turned into a wonderful irrigation settlement on the same scale as Mildura and Merbein, but from the Murray settlers can be assured of plentiful supplies of water for stock and domestic purposes. In that area wool and wheat will be produced. When one recalls that Australia's wool cheque for last year was £150,000,000, one appreciates the need to further develop primary industries. No matter how many secondary industries are established, the basis of development will be in the field of primary industry. The establishment of secondary industries in rural towns will not solve the problem of decentralization. Around those places there must be prosperous farming communities which will assist to implement the policy of decentralization.

Along the Murray river there are great potentialities for the development of our natural resources, particularly by immigrants of the right type. Australia will never build up her population to 20,000,000 unless there is greater development in primary production. It will be of no use planning for increased primary production after immigrants have arrived here. Now is the time when plans should be prepared. Instead of people fighting at Canberra over the use of the waters of the Snowy river, they should be planning to use those waters along the Murray valley in New South Wales and Victoria. The North-West Mallee has great possibilities, and people who talk about giving that area back to the blacks are doing a national disservice.

Mr. LIND.—We need more man power in Australia.

Mr. GALVIN.—Man power is coming to Australia, and it must be fed; for that purpose the waters of the Murray and the Snowy rivers should be used in the Mallee areas. I feel that the Bill will lead people to approach the north-west problem in an optimistic way, not with feelings of despair.

There are one or two features of the measure which call for criticism. The Bill proposes to set up a North-West Mallee committee comprised of a field officer of the Lands Department, an

officer of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission experienced in Mallee problems and a practical farmer from the area. It is provided that the Secretary for Lands shall be chairman of the committee. I submit that the Secretary for Lands now has a full time job. I worked with him for two years, and I do not think he can possibly spare the time needed for the solution of this particular problem. Possibly he could give the committee the benefit of his advice and experience, but it would not be fair to expect him to undertake this work as a full-time job.

I do not like the proposed basis of assessment of rentals in this area which should be similar to that applying in other places. I cannot see any reason why the recommendation of the committee should not be adopted. Then each settler would know what rent he had to pay. It would be 2½ per cent. on a reasonable production value of his property and 4 per cent. on Crown land and the value of structural and other improvements made by the Crown. The rental charge could be re-appraised, say, every seven or ten years. If a settler was forced to restrict the number of stock carried owing to drought conditions, provision should be made to give him a reduction in the amount of rent to be charged in drought years. I repeat that the proposed amount of compensation is inadequate, for no man could possibly rehabilitate himself on the sum to be made available. I fear that trustee and mortgage companies would reap a benefit from the Bill.

Mr. BARCLAY (Mildura).—As the representative of a large area coming within the ambit of the Bill, I congratulate the Government on its approach to this problem. The Government has brought down a sound measure which will alleviate some of the difficulties of the North-West Mallee settlers, even if it does not settle all their problems. Settlement commenced in the Yatpool area in 1912-1913, when blocks of 320 acres were allotted. Subsequently they were found to be too small and so they were increased to 640 or 800 acres. From 1922 to 1926, when the Millewa-Carwarp belt was settled, areas were taken up by

settlers right through to the South Australian border. In the Merrinee area there was a settlement of English migrants, to consider whose plight a Royal Commission was appointed in 1932. These people were granted compensation of up to £500, on the ground that the land was unsuitable for farming purposes. Some of the settlers returned to England, but others have remained in the area. As the honorable member for Bendigo said, a number of them were servicemen who fought on Gallipoli with you, Mr. Speaker, and in the same battalion as the honorable member for Collingwood and myself. Later they served in France. They are most respected members of the community, and they have spent most of their lives in this area. It is felt that the Bill will give them some security of tenure.

I shall now discuss the clauses. Clause 1 sets out the purpose of the measure. Clause 2 defines the area of the North-West Mallee. I direct the attention of members to clause 3, which provides for the appointment of the North-West Mallee committee. Paragraph (d) of sub-clause (1) says that one member of the committee shall be a person experienced in Mallee conditions. Settlers in the area, particularly returned servicemen, insist that this appointee shall be one with practical knowledge and experience in Mallee farming and, if possible, a returned serviceman. There should be no trouble in selecting such a representative from the area, who should be experienced in mixed farming and grazing under Mallee conditions. A man with the necessary qualifications, we contend, would assist to alleviate many of the troubles of settlers and guide the committee when it is planning to solve the problems of the area.

Clause 4 provides that the Governor in Council may, from time to time, by proclamation published in the *Government Gazette*, declare areas to be North-West Mallee settlement areas under the Act. I would point out that the *Government Gazette* is seldom read by these settlers, and so a provision should be embodied in the Bill prescribing that such proclamations shall appear in the *Sunraysia Daily*. That is read by Mallee people and from it they glean most of

their information. I stress the need of publishing regulations and proclamations in it.

Clause 5 provides for the compulsory acquisition of land in settlement areas. Although it appears to be a harsh provision, it is necessary if there is to be successful settlement in the North-West Mallee. I do not believe in the principle of compulsory acquisition of land, but if persons are not prepared to surrender their holdings for the national good the land should be compulsorily acquired. Clause 6 provides for the sales of holdings. There will be a public auction, and the settler will have the right to purchase the land. Clause 6 deals with the compensation payable. I agree with the Deputy Leader of the Labour party that the proposed amount is not adequate. The sum of £650 might be all right for a man who has left a holding, but a man who has been compulsorily removed is entitled to at least £1,250. In Committee I shall submit an amendment to that effect.

Under clause 7 a settler will have the right to purchase a home for himself and family. This is a sound proposition, especially in view of the fact that the housing position is so acute. If a settler desires to buy a house he should be able to acquire it on the 1937 valuation, less an allowance for depreciation. A committee of inquiry, appointed by the Dunstan Government, found that a number of properties had been over valued. This clause will also enable a settler to be paid for any improvements effected. Clause 8 relates to perpetual leases. The Honorary Minister, the Hon. P. T. Byrnes, has promised that this provision will be reviewed, and if settlers are successful freehold titles will be granted. The clause sets out the order in which perpetual leases are to be granted by the Board of Land and Works. First of all, there are land occupiers who have been engaged in farming before the proclamation of a settlement area. Then come the owners of freehold land adjacent to a settlement area which the Board does not regard as a living area. Discharged soldiers are third in the order of applicants, all of whom must write to the Secretary for Lands for perpetual leases.

Clause 10 relates to fencing. In my district there are defined tracks and old roads. Local settlers have considerable trouble in dealing with picnickers and shooting parties who break down fences and leave gates open. As a result of such happenings they have had to spend time in searching for their stock, and, unfortunately, they have failed to find a good proportion of it. We wish the area to be compact, and so, subject to the approval of the shire council, all unnecessary roads should be closed. I do not know what the Chief Secretary thinks about the shooting of birds in that district. Paragraph (e) of clause 10 entitles a settler to dispose of his property within a certain time. He should not be penalized and should be entitled to extra payments on account of improvements effected by himself. Paragraph (g) regulates the stock to be carried on the holding. That idea has the approval of most of the committee in our area. Under paragraph (i) a settler may be removed if he does not comply with the conditions of his lease. That provision is harsh. A man who is in difficulties should be given ample opportunity to meet the terms of the lease before it is voided. I should like to have an assurance from the Chief Secretary that that will be the case.

Mr. DODGSHUN.—Before such action was taken the settler would probably be asked to show cause.

Mr. BARCLAY.—Sub-clause (2) of clause 11 is a desirable provision relating to rates. Some years ago a deputation waited on the honorable member for Gippsland East, when he was Minister of Lands, and asked that the rates and water charges should be combined. Under the terms contained in the Bill, the settlers should have no difficulty in keeping the channels clean and paying their water rates, but we wish this to be put on a very low rental basis. It must be remembered that over the years these men have fought droughts and sandstorms. There have been occasions when residents in Mildura could not see far in front of themselves on account of the duststorms coming from the Millewa country. Paragraph (a) of sub-clause (4) of clause 11 gives the Board of Land

and Works the right to waive any rent, but it contains no reference to water rates. Obviously, if settlers require water they should pay for it, but not a few of them experience great difficulties, and on occasions, need special consideration. This is a matter that will be referred to more fully in Committee.

Clause 12 is probably one of the best in the Bill so far as settlers are concerned. It enables the Board of Land and Works to do all such things as are necessary to reconstruct holdings. For instance, it will be possible to reconstruct dams convenient to a water channel. The Board will also have power to remove and re-erect a settler's home at a place adjacent to a channel. All that work will be done before a man obtains his perpetual lease. Of course, a person is not permitted to hold more than one lease. I wish to congratulate the Honorary Minister, Mr. Byrnes, on the time and energy he has devoted to the preparation of this measure. He was always ready to visit the Mallee and to interview settlers concerning their needs. In Committee, I shall propose that the amount of compensation payable be increased and also that the water charges be reviewed in dry years. I commend the Bill, which is a good step in the direction of assisting the settlers in the North-West Mallee.

Mr. MERRIFIELD (Moonee Ponds).— I should like to offer a few comments on the Bill. Although it affects only a limited area of the State, it is nevertheless important. It is all the more important because the broad lines of policy laid down are those proposed by the Cain Government. This is only one of the many measures which the previous Ministry prepared for submission to Parliament. I am wondering what will happen when this Government exhausts the stock of Bills formulated by its predecessors. The land problem has been with every civilized community. It is still with us, although after 100 years the State is relatively densely settled. There is no doubt that the land problem will be acute in parts which suffer by virtue of soil conditions or climatic conditions, or both. It is obvious that a measure which covers parts of Victoria adversely affected in