**HAILSTORM RELIEF (VALIDATION)BILL 1925**

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY, 18 AUGUST 1925, PAGE 481**

**Second reading.**

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS (Hon. T. Butterfield)—Members will remember the hailstorm which occurred last year, and which did considerable damage in various parts of the State. This Bill is to ratify the action of the Government in giving assistance to those who were unable to assist themselves, or to get relief from sources other than the Government. It proves again that whenever any section of the community is in dire trouble, and their assets are such that private enterprise will not come to their assistance, it always falls on the Government to take up their case. This measure applies to only eight persons, and the amount involved is something like £500. Those persons were in need, and the Government thought it was their duty to come to their assistance. Many other people whose assets were more substantial were able to get assistance from the banks, the merchants, or traders, but in the case of these eight persons, as well as some returned soldiers, who were assisted by the Soldiers' Settlement Department, the Government had to come to the relief of the men on the land. Members are aware that it is proposed to bring in a Bill this session for the establishment of a rural bank. I have always maintained that, seeing we have so many Acts authorising advances to be made by the Government it will be of advantage to have them co-ordinated. That will result in a saving to the Government, because while at present we take only the risky business.

The Hon. G. R. Laffer—You only get the risky business.

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS—Under the present circumstances we cannot get such a profit as in a good time, but shall get a full proportion of whatever dividend may be declared. This Bill is introduced for the purpose of securing ratification by Parliament of the action of the Government in the earlier part of this year in assisting a number of settlers on the West Coast who had sustained severe losses in their last season's crops as a result of a destructive hailstorm which passed over their district at a time when the crops were nearly ripe. In some cases, the whole crops were destroyed, in others a very small percentage was left in a fit state to be reaped, and supplied little more than seed wheat for the present season. As these settlers were all relying on the proceeds of their harvest to enable them to carry on for the next season and put in a crop it was obvious that if anything was to be done it was of no use unless done immediately. Therefore, after a thorough investigation of each settler's circumstances, the Government made arrangements for the settlers, to be supplied with the necessary commodities by the local traders. Each case was considered on its merits, and the method adopted was for a representative of the Government to visit each settler and give him an order which he could present to his local storekeeper for such quantities of seed, chaff, super, &c., as were necessary. Each of the settlers signed a written acknowledgment, and agreed with the Commissioner of Crown Lands to pay the cost of the commodities with interest at 6 per cent. by February1, 1926, or on transfer of their mortgages or holdings. They also agreed to use the goods on their land, and to give the Commissioner a bill of sale over the next crop when called upon to do so. The number of settlers to whom assistance was given is eight, and the total amount paid out about £500. Strictly speaking no funds were available for the purpose of assisting settlers in the manner adopted by the Government, and unless Parliament validates the action of the Government some doubt as to the validity of the contracts made by the settlers will arise. Knowing that in previous cases of distress Parliament has always been willing to support the Ministry in giving relief, the Government now asks Parliament to sanction its action and put the transaction on a proper legal footing.

The Hon.G. R. LAFFER secured the adjournment of the debate until August 19.