8. CLOSER SETTLEMENT: THE CLOSER SETTLEMENT ACTS OF 1904-1906

CONCEPT: LANDS FOR CLOSER SETTLEMENT BILL, 1896: PROPOSED AGRICULTURAL SETTLEMENT BILL, 1900, AND CLOSER SETTLEMENT ACT, 1901: THE CLOSER SETTLEMENT ACT, 1904: THE CLOSER SETTLEMENT (AMENDMENT) ACT, 1906: THE FIRST ESTATES ACQUIRED—FURTHER PROGRESS OF CLOSER SETTLEMENT: TENURES: THE DESTINY OF THE INLAND: IMMIGRATION.

CONCEPT

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, as it has been noted previously, there was general agreement that previous land settlement policies had proved an absolute failure. New social, political and economic forces were at work, causing a complete re-orientation in land settlement theory and practice, whilst the rise of the Labour Party after 1891 and its then regarded "radical" ideas upon land ownership, kept the problem of land acquisition and usage to the forefront.[100A] For many years there was hardly a session of Parliament without a Land Bill on the Parliamentary business paper, and there was continuous activity in the Department concerned. In the forty years from 1884, New South Wales, it is said, revised her land laws, "till seventy times seven," and any new Legislative device or administrative method in one State was soon reflected in the systems of the others.

The underlying principles in these years had crystallized along certain lines: first, universal recognition of the failure of the free selection laws of 1861; second, agreement upon the need to promote, as far as practicable by legislation, the establishment of as many small settlers as possible on the land, on holdings which would not be too large to be fully worked, nor too small to provide a comfortable living; third, similar agreement as to the necessity to open up lands suitable for closer settlement and farming in proximity to the railways, preferably by voluntary agreement, but, if not, by compulsory acquisition; fourth, a continuing anxiety that the pastoral industry should not be hampered unnecessarily and that, subject to pastoral lands being used to the best advantage, the runholder should be protected; finally, a slowly dawning recognition that unearned increments or increases in the unimproved value of lands as may come from the efforts of the community should not be appropriated solely by the private land owner. All these principles are to be seen illustrated in the ideas expressed in relation to closer settlement in the legislation of this period.

South Australia's example in land legislation greatly influenced New South Wales. In 1895 a State Advances Act in South Australia authorised assistance to farmers, in the form of advances on mortgage or in reducing or remitting rentals. Previously in 1890 this State had shown the way of actively assisting closer settlement by the repurchase of land in order to provide workmen with small blocks contiguous to their place of employment. Adopted in other States, this idea of repurchase for small settlement facilitated the acceptance of the policy which resulted in the large resumption and closer settlement schemes throughout Australia in the new century. For when governments came to face

[100A] *cf.* N. B. Nairn, "The Role of the Trades and Labor Council in New South Wales, 1871-91," *Historical Studies of Australia and New Zealand*, Vol. 7, No. 28 (May, 1957).

up to the social obligation of placing new settlers on the land, stock-taking maps almost invariably revealed only remnants of the safer, better lands available, all the most suitable being locked up in large private estates. Finally, owing to pressing social and economic exigencies, South Australia in 1897 was forced to pioneer large-scale resumption, thus setting a further example soon to be followed by New South Wales.

Nevertheless there were difficulties of a practical nature to interfere with any such plans. For example, one effect of the unprecedented ten years drought in New South Wales which extended from 1892 to 1902

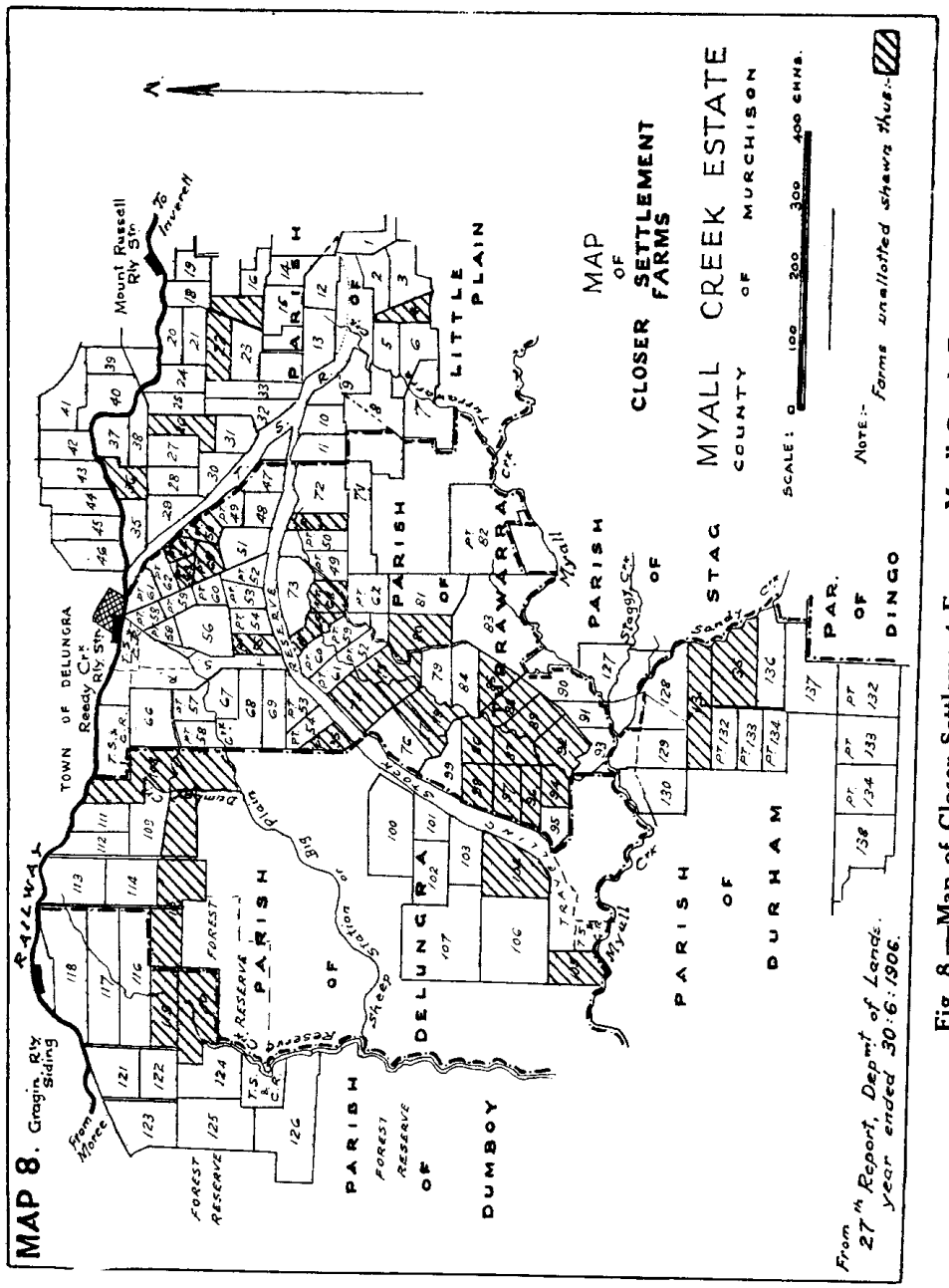

Fig. 8.—Map of Closer Settlement Farms—Myall Creek Estate.

The First Estate purchased and subdivided for Closer Settlement in New South Wales (1905).

was a large mass of difficulties in connection with repayments by settlers to the Crown in respect of lands already acquired. There were a large number of appeals for time to pay and for other concessions of various kinds.[101] A sequence of good seasons from 1903 onwards, however, together with improvement in the prospects of farmers and settlers generally, caused a strong revival of interest in farming and a continuing and irresistible demand on the Crown to provide farms for bona fide occupation and settlement. The situation was complicated also by other factors such as the reallotment of the leasehold land becoming available for settlement in the late 1890's, a Department of Lands report stating in 1901 that:

> " . . . The activity in land matters which sprang into existence on the expiration of the pastoral leases in the Central Division still continues, and the Department has been severely taxed to measure up land for intending applicants. The task would be much easier than it is if conflicting interests did not exist, but every selector who deems himself entitled to extend his area has asserted his claim for more land. There are, in fact, three claimants who ask for consideration, viz.: the man on the land already, the outgoing pastoral lessee, and the new seeker for land. These interests are apt to cross each other, and are much less easy of adjustment than probably many suppose . . ."[102]

The period of the early 1900's, however, taking all these considerations into account, is remarkable for the rapidity with which new farms and new farming areas were established. The Crown acquisitions and subdivisions directly resulted in an increased rural population and in the development of country towns adjacent to the estates acquired, such as Inverell, Wagga, Tamworth, Culcairn, Forbes and others, but in addition they also had a profound effect in encouraging private subdivisions. The settlements of these early years were "undoubtedly an unqualified success".

Two principles have been incorporated in Closer Settlement almost from the beginning and have survived—firstly, the machinery for examining and reporting upon proposals for the acquisition of estates was vested in a Board; secondly, the decision as to the acquisition of any estate was left to Parliament, "without regard to the amount involved, it being held that in these matters it is necessary to have the sanction of the highest tribunal".

For the State, the process of repurchase of lands so lightly disposed of in earlier times is a "painful" one. At any time the capacity of the State to inaugurate and maintain a scheme of closer settlement based on the acquisition and disposal of privately owned estates is limited by the funds available. By and large, New South Wales has conducted its closer settlement activities, involving the outright disposal of closer settlement lands, principally through a circulating fund financed in the main by borrowings. There is no scope, on the other hand, for the circulating fund method when the tenure system is leasehold. Lands acquired for subdivision remain State owned, and as the original capital is thus locked up, succeeding purchases of estates require the raising of fresh capital. When closer settlement was first undertaken by New South Wales, new securities called "Ministerial Certificates" were

[101] *Annual Reports of the Department of Lands*, 1900-1901.

[102] *Ibid.* *See also* Royal Commission of Inquiry (1905) into "The Land Scandals"—regarding allegations of wholesale bribery in land transactions between 1899 and 1901 (T. H. Hassall, Minister for Lands) and subsequently while W. P. Crick was Minister.

offered to vendors in lieu of cash. The certificates authorised the payment out of the Treasury by instalments of the amount of the purchase money or compensation. However, they could only be negotiated with the Minister for Lands, and this made the certificates unpopular. In consequence, they played only a minor part in the finance of closer settlement, and were soon replaced by debentures with fixed currency and without any restriction on their negotiation.

Closer settlement is inevitably a costly undertaking. Land sufficient to provide a living (home maintenance) area has to be secured at a price which will enable the settler to discharge his purchase obligation, meet interest payments and, at the same time, make a living. During boom periods there is always the danger that the State by operating on an extensive scale may inflate land values to its disadvantage. But on the other hand, its usual experience in times of drought and depression and of pastoral and farming difficulties, has been to face requests for reduced and deferred repayments to the Crown which, when granted, have had lasting effect. Taking into account factors such as these, Closer Settlement, to a much greater degree than original Crown land settlement, requires for its success that it attracts a type of settler who possesses some capital of his own so that an excessive burden of debt is not placed on each farm.

LANDS FOR CLOSER SETTLEMENT BILL, 1896

In 1896, when Mr. (later Sir) Joseph Carruthers introduced a bill designed to foster Closer Settlement, it met with a surprising degree of opposition even from within his own party. Introduced in the Lower House, it encountered such criticism that it was abandoned—as likewise a previous bill based on similar principles, prepared by Mr. Henry Copeland, M.L.A. for the Sydney (Phillip) district, when a former Minister for Lands in the previous Government, had also lapsed. Nevertheless, this inoperative bill of 1896 is significant as the forerunner to the later Closer Settlement Acts.

In the lengthy explanations given to the Legislative Assembly, the Minister was most caustic in showing how the large estates were land-locking settlement and nullifying the agricultural propensities opened up by the recently constructed railways. In speaking of the previous land policies and the present difficulties confronting the State, he explained that:

> " . . . By the Land Act of 1861 the people sold their birthright for a mess of pottage. By the operation of the auction and improvements system, a man obtained large areas of land for cash down from a government which was run for the purposes of getting as much revenue as possible into the coffers of the State, rather than on the principle of promoting settlement . . . In addition, the cost of administering the government itself has been enormously increased by reason of the scattering of our population on the lands available in these scattered blocks. We have had to follow in the footsteps of population with small schools, with post offices and all the machinery of the State . . . We have had our railway returns seriously suffering by reason of the occupancy of our land . . . In Victoria they have saved themselves to a large extent from this state of affairs by a wise provision in their Land Act which enacted that if the lessee of any pastoral holding was found directly or indirectly to have acquired a freehold interest in the land held by him under lease, not only did he forfeit that land but the lease itself . . . this effectively prevented dummying and consequently the land aggregations

so marked in New South Wales . . . Day by day in the towns there is an enormous demand by the people for employment, deputations to the Treasury, to government after government, asking for work all over the country, whilst in the country districts there is demand for land . . ."

(*Parliamentary Debates,* 3rd June, 1896.)

Next, in discussing how to make land available for closer settlement, the Minister explained that whilst there might be some objection to the resumption clauses in his proposed bill, he could show that without such powers of resumption the bill would be useless. Uppermost in his mind was what they had done elsewhere in Australasia in facing up to the problem now so urgent in New South Wales. He instanced the case of the New Zealand scheme:

"For many years they have had a Land Act in New Zealand under which if an owner valued the estate at what was considered a low figure, the Government might take the land at that price . . . The first experiment in that direction was on the Cheviot Estate which was a wonderful success, both from the point of view of settlement and financially. The estate comprised 84,000 acres. The Government . . . valued it at over £300,000 and the owners valued it at £260,000 and demanded that the Government should either accept the lower valuation or purchase the estate at their price. The Government therefore said, 'Very well, we will purchase the estate at your price,' and then purchased it. What has been the result? In 1894, 325 blocks in the estate were subdivided into homestead lots, village lots, perpetual leaseholds, and grazing farms; that is, 76,000 acres out of the original 84,000 acres were disposed of in less than two or three years after the estate was taken over by the Government; £35,000 in cash was paid to the Government for the land taken up in the way described, and that amount counterbalanced the cost of surveying and subdividing the property, while there was an annual return of £14,000 from the perpetual leaseholds and grazing farms—a return equal to £5 2s. 8d. per cent. per annum on the total cost. The Government were then borrowing money at less than 4 per cent. so that the return was sufficient to pay interest and to provide a sinking fund for the repayment of the original expenditure, while 8,000 acres were left undisposed of. A considerable portion of that 8,000 acres comprised village land or town lots, and should be able to obtain a good figure. Upon the original estate, before the Government resumed it, there lived the proprietor, his family and a few employees, but within two years after the resumption there were 800 persons settled upon the estate, or over 230 families.

" . . . Therefore the transaction may be regarded as a financial success, while it also increased settlement, increased trade, and increased the trade upon the railways. . . . In 1894 the New Zealand Parliament passed an Act for the purchase of land for settlement purposes . . . In twelve months the Government had purchased 18 estates, comprising in all, 53,000 acres, for a total of £175,000. . . . In Queensland, they have an Act for the purpose of acquiring land for closer settlement . . .

" . . . There is no reason to pay boom prices for the land. So long as you can get back the money you pay for the land and establish settlement upon it, every honest purpose which the State has to serve will be served and nobody will be damaged . . . I think it is almost an appalling state of affairs that in this colony we should have a population of nearly 700,000 in the cities and suburbs, and only 500,000 in the country towns and country districts, and that for the congested population of the cities there should be absolutely no great outlet offered by the State . . ."

The Minister showed further how absurd the position had become. He had met at Hay a large deputation of small selectors on conditional purchases acquired under the Robertson 1861 Act, and situated from 50 to 100 miles from the furthermost point of the railway terminal. These men "were settled under conditions for agricultural purposes of a very precarious nature . . . . on pastoral country". The State had sold 50,000,000 acres of land and all that it had got was 60,000 holders and

probably not even 50,000 settlers. In the State there were 656 holdings, each averaging over 31,000 acres, comprising fully half of the total alienated land, a number of them in the single hand not only of banks but of individuals. Of this 25,000,000 acres so acquired in these big properties, not one-half per cent was under cultivation. To illustrate this position, the Minister showed how the position existed in the various districts of the State.

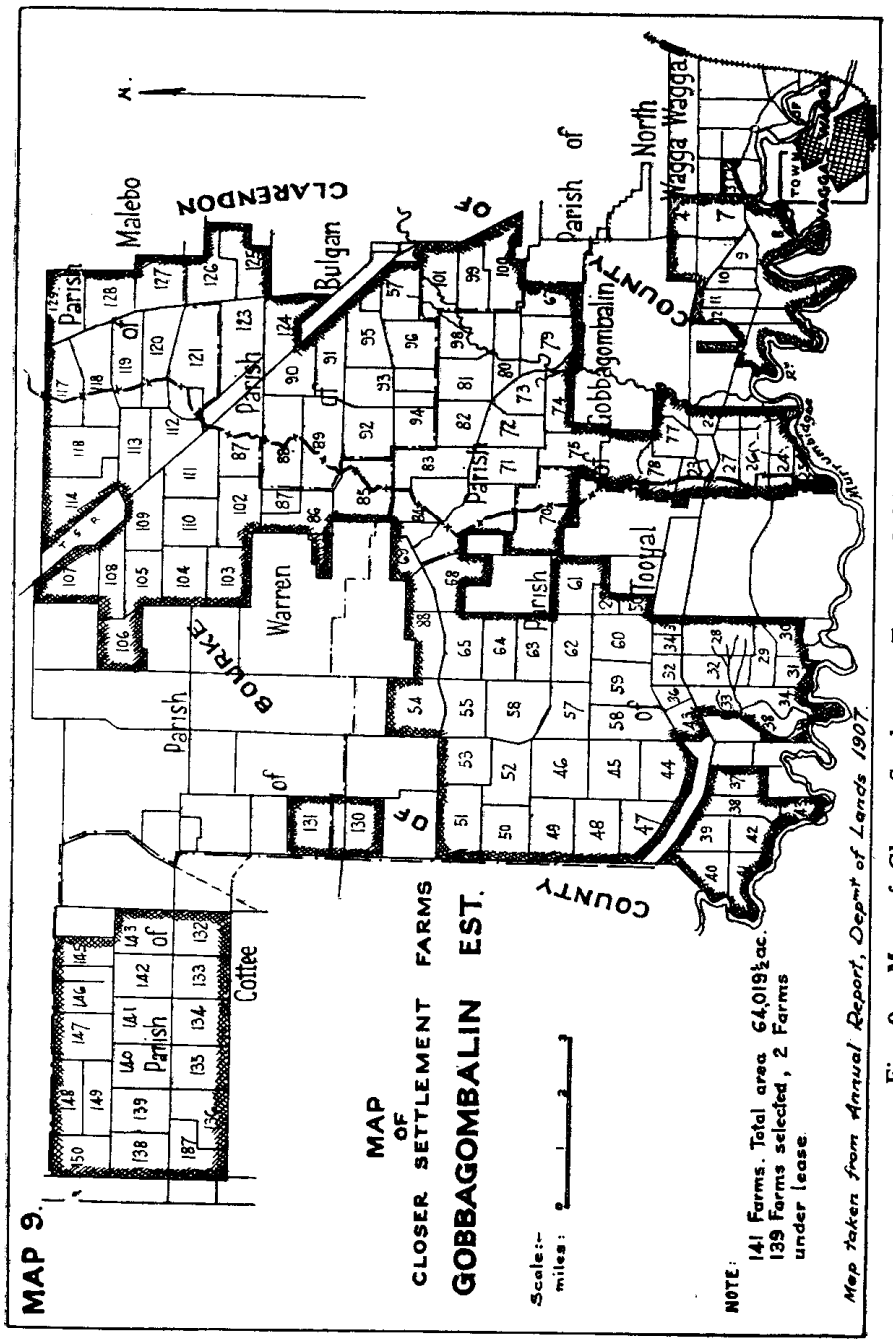

Fig. 9.—Map of Closer Settlement Farms—Gobbagombalin Estate.

For example, in the Hunter and Hawkesbury Valleys, of 1,700,000 acres that had been alienated, only 60,000 acres were under cultivation (including Richmond, Windsor, West Maitland and all the towns along the northern line as far as Murrurundi). Fourteen persons owned 267,000 acres, cultivating 331 acres; 250 persons owned 939,000 acres, cultivating 3,777 acres; yet these districts had 250 miles of railway running up to and subdividing these enormous freeholds, many of them comprising the richest river flats possessed by the State. The 60,000 cultivated acres gave employment for 7,000 men, whilst the huge balance of pastoral land found employment only for 2,750 men.

Similarly, in the Bathurst, Orange and Mudgee districts, 62 persons owned estates each averaging 23,481 acres; the total area involved was 1,500,000 acres, or nearly one-third of the alienated lands; only 7,334 acres were cultivated.

A worse state of affairs existed at Tamworth, Armidale and New England: 75 persons here owned over 2,000,000 acres of land, or more than one-half of the alienated land, and they had only 3,000 acres under cultivation. Of the total occupied land (10-million acres), only 86,000 acres were under cultivation. Agriculture employed only 2,699 persons, as against 5,000 in grazing and dairying; yet the district carried 280 miles of railway.

Finally, the Riverina—"the most important of all". In the Riverina, 13½ million acres were alienated, of which about 60 per cent was alienated in fee simple or conditional purchase. In this huge area of country, 193 estates averaged over 43,000 acres each (aggregate 8,342,000 acres); 4,000 acres, or about 3 per cent, were cultivated, giving employment to 2,800 farmers, as against 3,000 pastoral workers on the balance of the land. Two railway lines extended from Narrandera to Hay and Narrandera to Jerilderie—"One is a dead loss, and the other of the same character". Proceeding from Narrandera to Hay, explained the Minister, 202,000 acres of freehold land was in the one estate; this property was combined with another in the one man's ownership, representing in all 461,000 acres of freehold land, with about 70 miles of railway frontage, and about 70 to 100 miles of river frontage. In a journey of 150 miles, there were seven estates, varying in size from 70,000 acres to nearly 500,000 acres of freehold land; yet, "the land near Narrandera is as good wheat-growing land as any in the world". From Narrandera to Jerilderie there was practically the same position, for half a dozen estates monopolised the whole territory. "You go right down to the Victorian border and find that it is just the same."

"Such a state of affairs," emphasized the Minister, "cannot go on in this colony without creating a very great menace to the welfare of the country."

(*Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd June, 1896.)

PROPOSED AGRICULTURAL SETTLEMENT BILL, 1900 AND CLOSER SETTLEMENT ACT, 1901

If public conscience had not yet stirred in 1896 to support a Closer Settlement Act (Mr. Carruthers later admitted that the 1896 Act had not been proceeded with because the Government was heckled by a few of

its own supporters—one of the serious blunders of the previous Reid administration), the break-up of some of the big estates either by voluntary means or compulsory State direction was becoming increasingly urgent. The general idea—though not the detailed administrative devices—of closer settlement had occupied public attention for some years. Practically every country member who spoke on the 1896 bill admitted the "absolute necessity" for a bill of this character but was fearful that in its operation it might lend itself to large landholders "unloading themselves at the expense of the State", notwithstanding their awareness of the Agricultural Lands Purchases Act, 1894, which had been recently introduced in Queensland and which itself had followed similar legislation in both South Australia and New Zealand.

The Proposed Agricultural Settlement Bill, 1900 (re-introduced as the Closer Settlement Act, 1901) is of interest from the point of view of the Parliamentary debates associated with it and since also it proceeded directly into the Acts of the next few years.[103]

In explaining the principles of the proposed new Closer Settlement Bill (1901) its architect, the Hon. W. P. Crick, Minister for Lands, emphasized the precautions that had been taken in its drafting so as to cover all possible contingencies that might arise:

> ". . . The land upon which we desire to put the people is highly rich agricultural or pastoral land, but principally agricultural land, or agricultural

[103] *Proposed Agricultural Settlement Bill*, 1900. The machinery clauses of the bill included provision for the issue of proclamations over land which it was proposed to acquire. After such proclamation the question of resumption was to be then referred to the local land board to take evidence in open court as to the following:

(*a*) The fair value of the land to the owner;
(*b*) The suitability of the land for agricultural settlement;
(*c*) The water supply to the land and to land in its neighbourhood;
(*d*) The probability of the immediate sale of the land under the provisions of the Act;
(*e*) The demand for land for agricultural settlement in the neighbourhood;
(*f*) The area and character of Crown land available for agricultural settlement in the neighbourhood;
(*g*) The value of the improvements on the land, and the distance from and means of access to the nearest railway station, port or town.

The board in due course would submit its report and evidence taken, which the Minister would in turn refer to both Houses of Parliament. It was proposed that the real purchaser of an estate so acquired would be not the Minister nor the Government, but Parliament, "after the fullest inquiry in the light of the day". The area would be purchased or resumed and then cut up into suitably sized blocks, not larger than 640 acres, and sold. The owners would be paid in Government debentures with 25 years currency, rate of interest not to exceed 4 per cent nor to be less than 3½ per cent, and the total of debentures and stock issued in any one year not to exceed £300,000. For every £100 worth of land bought by the settlers, they would pay annually £7 12s. 0d. inclusive of interest and repayment of principal, so that in twenty years the whole amount of the purchase price would be paid off.

A separate fund was to be established into which would be paid all fees and moneys derived from the purchase of land from the Crown. That fund, so it was planned, being kept separate, would in 20 years pay off these debentures together with all costs incurred by the Government in connection with them.

A condition of residence for five years was to apply to all agricultural farms. No person holding land from the Crown under any tenure would be eligible to acquire one of these farms, nor a child under 16 years of age, nor a married woman, to prevent collusion and dummying.

Finally, the bill provided that the purchaser was to erect a dwelling house on the land and maintain it during the time payments were being made to the Crown.

land with land suitable for pasture, within reach of railway lines . . . It is not sought to harshly take land from a man who has it unless it is shown upon the clearest testimony to the satisfaction of the local land board that the land is wanted for the purpose of closer settlement. The local land board having submitted its report, either party will have the right to appeal to the Land Appeal Court for satisfaction. The matter will then be brought before the houses of Parliament, and will be dealt with by motion to the

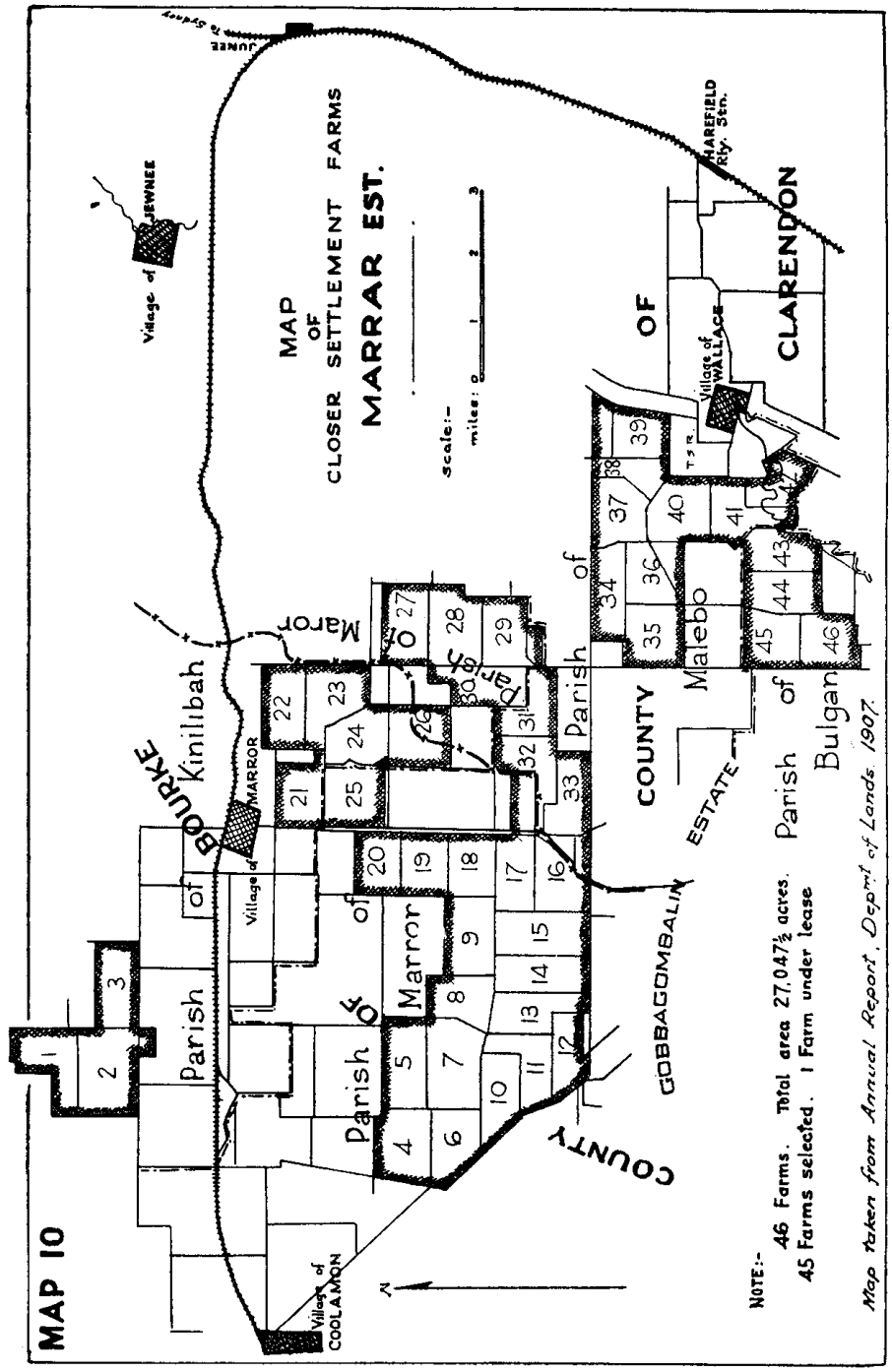

Fig. 10.—Map of Closer Settlement Farms—Marrar Estate.

> effect that the transaction is one which the Government ought to undertake. The motion must be carried not only by this Chamber, but also by the Legislative Council. What greater safeguard could there be for an honest deal between the man who has the land and the Crown than that there should be a full investigation between three tribunes, namely, the land board, the Legislative Assembly, and the Legislative Council . . . After these preliminaries the Government then may take over the land at a price not exceeding that recommended by the land board . . . We propose then on the capital value of this land to charge a rental. The land will be leased, because once having got it back, the State has no intention of ever selling it again. In the course of years we will (thus) wipe off the fund created to buy the land, and the interest on that fund, and in that way the State will have acquired the freehold of the land at no cost . . ."
>
> (Second-reading Speech, *Parliamentary Debates,* 22nd August, 1901.)

The importance of the proposed Crick legislation would appear to have been fully realised by Parliament, and this fact is well attested by the vigour and apparent sincerity shown in the Parliamentary debates of this period.

Speaking on the measure, member after member supported the principles of the bill: Close to Casino, stated Mr. R. D. Meagher (14th November, 1900), three or four pastoral holdings practically blocked the town from expansion. Around Casino there were "thousands and thousands of acres of beautiful agricultural land running from the valley of the Richmond under the McPherson and Dividing Ranges down towards Grafton, which no one can touch because the land is in the hands of a couple of big stockowners . . ." Added Mr. Meagher, "I have no hesitation in saying that it is the best portion of Australia and I think I am correct in saying that nearly 50,000 head of cattle are carried by three men on that tract of country". Similarly, the town of Molong remained blocked on three sides by big pastoral estates. On the Richmond River, stated Mr. Kidd (20th November, 1900), the land beyond Casino almost to the Queensland border, whilst being eminently suitable for closer settlement, was occupied only by a few stations. At Cobar, the Lyne government, as also the Reid government, had put up blocks from 20,000 to 30,000 acres, at an annual rental of £4 10s. per block, and these lands could not find a tenant, while people were begging in and about the big towns for a small portion of land on which to settle. At Tamworth, Lithgow, Rylstone, Mudgee, Wellington, Casino and scores of other towns, stated Mr. Wills (20th November, 1900), "the bill will do an immense amount of good. It is in these districts that are situated in a better climate, where they can grow fruit and grain, that the bill will do an infinite amount of good . . . About most of these towns, men hold in large areas the very land which the people want. The bill will give an impetus to settlement which will in turn materially benefit the railways . . . You see where men are glad to take land on a five or six years lease on the halves system, and clear it, and put it under the plough—the very land they want to get on to".

At Wagga there were "large estates of from 70,000 to 80,000 acres, consisting of beautiful agricultural lands with the railway running through them, and on which no attempt whatever at settlement had been made". (Mr. Cruickshank, 20th November, 1900.)

Continued Mr. Rose (20th November, 1900):

> "The land tax has proved an absolute failure, although its supporters predicted that the effect of that tax would be to cause a large amount of land to be thrown open and to reduce the number of large estates . . . We have

had the land tax for five years and the large estates have increased. We have a larger monopoly of land to-day than we ever had before. Instead of the large estates being cut up, we are accumulating still larger estates. Take any country town of New South Wales, any place from Campbelltown to Albury, or from Windsor to Bathurst, and what do we find. We find that every country town is being congested, that every country town has its progress handicapped by these large estates."

In the district of Cowra there was one large estate on the edge of the town, of about 30,000 acres, which was practically choking the progress of the town, whilst at Narrabri there was another estate of 100,000 acres (Edgeroi) similarly blocking settlement (Mr. Waddell, 20th November, 1900).

In the debate which continued, Mr. Gormly explained that:

"On the railway from Narrandera to Hay, which passes for 107 miles through eight very large estates, there was an annual loss of between £40,000 and £50,000 for the railways for a great many years after it was constructed . . . Anyone who is acquainted with the conditions of this country must see that at no distant time the State will be compelled under stress of circumstances to acquire a great portion of the land which has passed out of its hands . . . Perhaps there is no portion of the colony which has suffered so much from the accumulation of large estates as the Riverina, where the great wealth accumulated from the gold mines of Victoria was expended in the acquisition of Crown lands, by auction and other forms of sale."

(*Parliamentary Debates*, 20th November, 1900.)

To which observations Mr. Chanter (20th November, 1900) added these further remarks upon the Riverina position:

"A finer tract of agricultural land than that between the town of Deniliquin and the Murray River, embracing the towns of Mathoura and Moama, cannot be found in the whole colony . . . But the people cannot get there. The land is being sold from time to time. It is being sold from one large landed proprietor to another. A small agriculturist who wants a few hundred acres cannot purchase it, because its proprietors will not sell the land in small areas. Only recently the far-famed Pericoota station changed hands for £250,000 . . . That is one instance. Others are Mathoura, Moira and Tuppal."

Rightly or wrongly, however, considerable suspicion at the time arose as to the proposals of the government on the grounds that an area of about 10,000,000 acres of Crown land within the Central division which was becoming available for settlement would be withheld because of the very strong influence of entrenched landed interests —"Settlement would be fobbed off on the promise that lands that were near towns would be made available for closer settlement". The most serious doubts, however, concerned possible land aggregation. For example, Mr. Macdonald (20th November, 1900) expressed these fears:

". . . I am opposed entirely to the idea that land that is resumed and paid for at the expense of the community should be resold in smaller areas. The utter absurdity of the thing is self-evident. The reason which led to the concentration of land in a small number of hands and the accumulation of large estates is the same to-day as it was when the land originally passed out of the hands of the Crown, and will be the same always. Land will gravitate into the hands of capitalists, no matter what the laws of the land may say. If you resume large areas of land to-day, and cut them up into smaller areas and sell them to-morrow, even if the payments extend over a period of 20 years . . . it only means that at the end of that time there will be a possibility and a probability of the land being again in single hands and accumulated in large estates. In order to have closer settlement in the most desirable parts of the country, there will be periodical resumptions by the government at the expense of the whole community in favour of land-owning occupiers . . ."

Then in connection with the vexed question whether the proposed tenures should be freehold or leasehold Mr. Cruickshank had this to say:

> "(The intentions of the bill are that) it will place on the land thrifty people who will utilise it. Why should the lands be leased . . . Any man who introduces a leasing clause into this bill does so with the direct object of killing the measure. If we lease the land we do not give a man that incentive that every Britisher desires—that is to be able to call his home his own. He wants to own his land, to improve it, and make five or ten blades of grass grow where only one struggled before. He wants to beautify it and leave it to his survivors. How can he do that if we introduce this crazy brand system of leasing the land, and taxing it? Who is going to take the risk of leasing the land or buying it for leasing . . ."
>
> (*Parliamentary Debates*, 20th November, 1900).

There were other doubts expressed also as to the practicalities of the bill, such, for example, as this criticism by Mr. Brown, the Member for Condobolin (20th November, 1900):

> " . . . The whole trend ostensibly of land legislation for the past 30-odd years has been in the direction of securing settlement. The great part of those lands which now form the big estates which this bill is supposed to break up were Crown lands, and these lands were alienated ostensibly for the purpose of securing settlement . . . Previous legislation having failed to secure closer settlement, what guarantee have we that this particular measure is going to secure the desired result . . . from returns I find that something like 160,000 valid conditional purchases have been made under the different land acts now in force, or which have been in force, and that at the present time less than 25,000 of those valid selections are held by the men who originally made them—that in other words, something like 138,000 valid selections made . . . have been transferred by those who originally made them. Therein lies the secret of these big estates, particularly in the central district and in the districts somewhat remote from the earlier settlement on the coast . . ."

But Mr. Crick, then Postmaster-General, acting on behalf of the Minister for Lands, had already explained this position in relation to the proposed Agricultural Settlement Bill:

> "The bill is brought forward in the interests of those who want land and cannot get it near centres of population . . . It will be argued that, with the millions of acres of Crown land which are now available, and which are falling in in the Central division, there is no necessity for this bill—that there will be plenty of land for people to go to. Certainly there will be plenty of land available, out in the wilds—away from all the advantages of civilisation, from schools and railway communications, if the people are willing to go and live the lives of blackfellows. But while we have a railway running through the country, while we have at great expense to keep up a postal service, and maintain public schools, not forgetting the churches which have been erected. I submit that it is a disgraceful thing to see tens of thousands of acres of land in the hands of two or three persons to the exclusion of thousands of men who could settle there and rear families . . We run railways through most rich and productive parts of the colony that are very sparsely settled . . . . Whatever views people may have held in the past about the State jobbing in land, the time has come when they must see that it is to the advantage of the State as well as the people at large that men should have opportunities of settling on land near railway communication . . . . it is idle to tell a man who desires to obtain land round Goulburn, Cowra, Wellington, Blayney, Moree, Tamworth, or other places that he can get plenty of land out on the Warrego, that he can go down the Darling, where there is plenty of land. You deprive a man's family of all the sweets of civilisation by sending them away from community with people of their own class, from the advantages of schools and churches, and depriving them of all the happiness which people expect to get when they live in a communal way as civilised people do.

". . . . In the first place, this bill is framed for the purpose of promoting agricultural settlement, in order that land may be taken and cut up into suitable areas round centres of population. And the principle of the bill is that in the end a purchase will not cost a shilling to the government who can borrow the money at 3½ or 4 per cent and stand as go-between between the landowner and the man who wants land but has no money to purchase it . . . Every preventative against land jobbing that can be devised has been introduced into the bill . . . ."

(*Parliamentary Debates,* 20th November, 1900.)

As that of an elder statesman, in experience if not in years, the contribution of Mr. J. H. Carruthers, who had previously tried to introduce the bill of 1896, is of particular interest in getting to the very heart of the problem:

". . . . There has been a system of peacocking of land going on from the very outset, and an aggregation of large estates that has occurred here, as it must occur in any young country, and we are now to amend the consequences of the system . . . . You cannot get men to herd together on small allotments or farms as long as there are large areas available. The ordinary cupidity of mankind asserts itself. Men will seek to pick out commanding positions upon large areas, and having obtained the leverage, they will gradually increase their holdings, not by means of contiguous blocks, but by means of scattered positions here and there . . . I venture to say that the Secretary of Lands is not able to put his finger upon many tracts of land in all the land falling to the Crown in the Central Division, upon which he could settle 50 settlers upon one solid block . . . I can see no harm in the State embarking on a venture of this kind, if the result is to increase the permanent prosperity of the people . . . . generally improve those public works which are revenue-producing to the State and at the same time diminish the demand for public works, here, there, and everywhere, all over the colony, by small bunches of settlers scattered over the 'never never'. You find them, for example, demanding a railway . . . . . Later on you find them demanding public works—water supply and other works of that kind at the Government expense . . . . These bunches of settlers in the back blocks—nearly all of them have had to go under through drought—have had the effect of increasing our expenditure on public works, which, when they have gone under, has proved to be money well wasted . . . . Any proposal which relieves the government of the necessity of forcing settlers into places where they cannot succeed must be in the interest of the State . . ."

(*Parliamentary Debates,* 20th November, 1900.)

Finally, in these examples, in the later debates of September, 1901, Mr. Carruthers had this further to say:—

" . . . . On land mattters, I think we hear more rubbish than on any other question discussed in this Chamber . . . . The best education hon. members could have, and one which would thoroughly revolutionize their ideas as to the best method of dealing with the public estate would be that they should have a period in office as Secretary for Lands . . . . Because we have some 120,000,000 to 140,000,000 acres of Crown lands undisposed of . . . . and something like 3,000,000 acres suitable for closer settlement . . . . it may surprise to learn that taking the settled districts of the colony we can hardly get two blocks of agricultural land in the whole division of over 5,000 acres in extent . . . The bulk of the land held under Crown lease which is falling due is in small detached areas . . . We cannot put closer settlement on pastoral land. If we do we commit a blunder . . . . It sounds very nice to talk about 4,000,000 acres of land being available, but that land is so isolated and broken up into sections and fragments by reason of the operation of our land system of past times

that we can hardly get subdivisions together. We might get them if we isolated the selectors 10 and 15 miles apart, with small and broken areas, but we cannot get a solid compact block; and I have yet to learn that the good settlement of the country is to proceed upon lines under which people would be disassociated from each other and deprived of the society they ought to enjoy. I have yet to learn that we are going to create a private peasantry in this country by sending small settlers into the isolated localities upon the back ridges . . . . The man who is prepared to perpetuate this system of leasing the Crown lands of the State in fragments, remnants and tags, here and there all over a holding so that they cannot be consolidated, is . . . . almost a criminal against the best interests of the country. I say that unfortunately . . . . a state of affairs has grown up by reason of the operation, not only of our land boards but our land system which it is almost appalling to contemplate. I said before, and I repeat now, that you could travel over Ireland and not find more deserted homes and homesteads than you will find in New South Wales. A large number of selections which were taken up have been abandoned—not abandoned in the sense of being given up to the Crown, but the occupiers have completed their term of residence and sold out to somebody else. The systems of blackmail and dummying have gone together hand in hand. We have the finest territory in the world, and it is owned how? In principalities, and the richest lands in the State have gone. The eyes have been picked out of the country . . . . Close to markets where railways are constructed . . . . land is not available. The tide of settlement has been thrown back further and further . . . . We have railways constructed through 40 miles of country all owned by one man and in one estate, and at the end of the journey you come to a little struggling hamlet where there ought to be a flourishing township.

". . . . If the foolish disposition of the public estate has resulted in the necessity for this bill, that shows that greater safeguards ought to be provided in future in regard to the disposal of this very valuable land which we want, not merely to acquire, but to hedge in with every restriction so that it may not get back into the hands of the monopolists . . . . If the Minister wants to have the leasing system, let him have leases in perpetuity . . . . I am totally opposed to the 99 year leases proposed . . . and let him accompany it with the most stringent conditions he thinks necessary. If we are to have leases at all, let us have what have been called perpetual leases . . . . I would suggest to the Minister that we should adopt the perpetual lease system, as it is termed, the homestead selection system, and that we should also provide for the fixing of the rents periodically on the basis of the unimproved value of the land . . . this bill is an absolute necessity, in the interests of closer settlement."

(*Parliamentary Debates*, 5th September, 1901.)

On the 1901 bill being referred to the Legislative Council, the right of resumption was excluded and the bill thus "emasculated". Lands could be taken up only when agreement could be reached with the owner, at no more than the price returned for land taxation plus 10 per cent. The blocks to be made available for closer settlement were not to exceed 640 acres and would be disposed of by auction on 99-year leases. The blocks would not be transferable for the first five years, and afterwards only with the consent of the Minister for Lands.

The right of compulsory resumption had been the very kernel of the bill, and on the rights of the Crown being thus restricted by the Council's amendments, Parliament was to be soon made realise that without such powers the bill was useless. Such a view was expressed by the Hon. A. Ross in these words: "I am perfectly sure that never an acre will be acquired in its (the bill's) present form".

THE CLOSER SETTLEMENT ACT NO. 37 OF 1904

The essential new element of this Act was the inclusion of a compulsory resumption clause, for otherwise the Bill practically re-enacted the existing law of the 1901 legislation. By this time there was a general acceptance of the "compulsory resumption" principle and a recognition of the fact that "closer settlement legislation had passed out of the experimental stage". The State had the alternative of extending the railway lines far inland at considerable expense to itself or of opening up estates adjoining the already existing lines and thereby "settling large numbers of people and at the same time increasing railway revenues".

In introducing this bill the Minister for Lands (Hon. James Ashton) was able also to show what had been done elsewhere:—

For example, in *New Zealand* up to 1904, no less than 139 estates had been resumed or purchased covering an area of 751,000 acres and costing some £3,440,000 at an average cost per acre of about £5. The progress of settlement had been spectacular:—

New Zealand (Closer Settlement)

	Acres	Settlers
1894-5 ..	9,000 ..	87
1895 ..	36,000 ..	242
1896 ..	41,000 ..	410
1897 ..	53,000 ..	305
1898 ..	19,000 ..	143
1899 ..	94,000 ..	471
1900 ..	61,000 ..	205
1901 ..	69,000 ..	283
1902 ..	70,000 ..	230
1903 ..	116,000 ..	232
1904 (1st 3 months)	37,000 ..	137

In all, 613,000 acres had been acquired in 139 estates, of which 476,000 acres had been disposed of, making 2,745 "homes". Of these 139 estates, 133 had been acquired voluntarily, and only six compulsorily resumed. Even in the case of the six estates resumed, some belonged to trustees who had no legal power to sell but who were in fact consenting parties. In the purchase of these 139 estates the total cost in actual money paid for resumption and incidental purposes was £3,046,000. The size of the average holding was 210 acres and the average value £1,109. Of the estates resumed the prospects were "good" for 122; "fair", "unsatisfactory" or "doubtful" for the remaining 17.

Victoria also had passed an Act practically identical with the New Zealand Scheme, whilst in *Queensland* to the end of 1903, under a scheme which was entirely voluntary, the area acquired was 307,000 acres, comprised in 20 estates, which had cost £789,000. The average cost of the land was £2 11s. 6d. per acre. Of the total area acquired, 25 per cent., or 53,000 acres, was being cultivated. There had been cut up from the land thus acquired, 1,322 holdings, of average area 192 acres, and at average cost of £596 per homestead.

A distinction drawn by the Minister between what had been done in New Zealand and Queensland and what he proposed in New South Wales, was that in the former cases closer settlement did not necessarily mean an increase in the number of settlers, since a selector was permitted to acquire an additional area under closer settlement, although already holding other Crown lands. The Act in New South Wales to overcome this specifically excluded from its provisions any person already holding Crown lands (excepting town or suburban land or annual lease). The intention was to "attempt to try to make every holding under this Act represent an addition to the number of settlers in the State".

Further significant provisions of the bill were that the compulsory clauses would only apply where the value of the private land intended to be set aside for closer settlement exceeded £20,000, so that "insecurity would be reduced to the smallest limits consistent with policy"; an owner would have the right to demand that the whole of the estate proposed to be resumed should be taken to prevent the Crown "peacocking" a man's property; in the matter of valuation the owner would retain the right of appeal to a tribunal comprising a Supreme Court judge and two assessors, one representing the Crown and the other the owner.

The debates incidental to the passage of the 1904 Act have an especial interest in the controversy surrounding the particular types of tenure which the Act introduced. The Minister (Hon. James Ashton) proposed a freehold tenure whereas the Labour party strongly supported leasehold, an attitude which Mr. Ashton had himself held to firmly and had publicly supported just a few years before. But why the change? Mr. Nielsen (Yass), in his contribution to the debate, which may be taken as a typical example, and arguing against the freehold tenure proposed, had this to say:—

> ". . . . Nothing that I have experienced in my political life has grieved me so much as the departure of the Minister for Lands from those principles which he in common with a large number of other Hon. Members has always advocated in the past 'the principle of keeping the land of the country for the people of the country'. This was the principle which I enjoyed to hear the Hon. Member speak on in the past . . . . it is a peculiar thing that the change of opinion has occurred just at the time when the people of New South Wales were beginning to show their hand in regard to this matter and when a large number of lessees living upon Crown land were beginning to demand that their title should be altered to freehold. . . . It is no peculiar coincidence . . . . it weighs not one iota with me whether the settlers are in favour of converting their holdings or not. What I say is that we have something to consider of more importance than the interests of the settlers who are on the land to-day; we have to consider the keeping of the land, not merely for the settlers of to-day, but for generations yet unborn, the people who will come after us, and who will have to make their living on these lands, and who, if we alienate the land, and allow it to be aggregated in large estates, will curse the day that Parliament ever dealt with the matter. . . .
>
> "From 1862 to 1904 there have been taken up (in New South Wales) 189,000 Conditional Purchases out of which number there remain in operation 34,000. . . . That proves conclusively that so far from being a system which has settled people on the land, it has allowed the lands of the State to be alienated, and become aggregated in the hands of large landholders. . . . Of the Conditional Purchases taken up no less than 159,000 have found their way into the hands of large landholders, have become merged in large estates and are now represented by some of the largest holdings . . . .

a very large extent of the country has been alienated in this way in the past at the price of one pound (£1) per acre and will have to be resumed under this bill, if it should become law, at prices ranging from £2 to £3 and even to £4 per acre. . . . Now with regard to the leasing system, let me point out that since the Act of 1895 came into operation, no less than 4,800 homestead selectors have been settled upon 1,700,000 acres and practically every one of those 4,800 people is in occupation today. . . ."

Throughout a long debate the Minister was charged with inconsistency, and the views of the majority of the Opposition would appear to have centred upon a *"graduated land tax . . . . and a leasehold system"*, some even arguing that taxation itself would be sufficient without a Closer Settlement Act at all. In answer to his critics, the Minister gave the following explanation of his reasons for choosing a freehold rather than a leasehold tenure system in the Act:—

". . . . I think I may say that in this country, as in most countries, there is, at this day, to be found a very large body of opinion (which holds) that the rights of man in regard to land differ very widely and distinctly from the rights of man in relation to the various forms of created wealth, and one of the phases of this opinion which I think is generally held, especially in Australia, is that individuals who get possession of land and allow it to be in a comparatively unused condition are not entitled to stand between the national growth of the country and the realisation of the material comfort of large numbers of their fellow creatures . . . . just as I regard the force of opinion which I am perfectly sure stands behind this closer settlement bill, proposing as it does to enforce the principle of compulsory resumption . . . . just as I regard that as an exercise of the supreme right of the community . . . . so I yield to no man with conviction . . . . that this community has a right to exercise . . . . sovereign and supreme rights in regard to the lands of this country which it has not the right to exercise in respect of any other thing that is owned by the individual. . . . .

". . . . This system of selling lands for freehold has been proceeding for years past by leaps and bounds. . . . In 1902 145,000 acres of land were disposed of under the Homestead Selection tenure but (at the same time) no less than 1,122,000 acres were sold under Conditional Purchase and Conditional Lease. . . . From 1895 to 1902, 2,432,000 acres were disposed of as Homestead Selection (but) no less than 6,600,000 acres were disposed of by way of Conditional Purchase and Conditional Lease. . . .

". . . . I say frankly and unequivocally that, theoretically, the system of leasing without periodic appraisement is perhaps the finest system of land tenure that could possibly be devised. . . . (However) it is not going to work well in practice or be a permanent form of tenure in this country. . . . The Homestead Selection does not provide for a rental of 4 per cent or 5 per cent on the capital value, but for the first five years, 1¼ per cent and for the remaining ten years, 2½ per cent. . . . This whole scheme of resumption by the payment of cold cash for private land, breaks down and ignominiously collapses if we do not get for the Crown a sum equal to the interest on the money we have to borrow to pay for these estates. . . . That means we must get at least 4 per cent. . . . Suppose for example there is a man paying 4 per cent on a leasehold tenure, holding a Settlement Purchase area under the Closer Settlement Act, and next door to him, just outside the exterior boundary of the area there is another Crown tenant who took up land not under the Closer Settlement Act but under the Crown Lands Act and who is either paying 1¼ per cent or 2½ per cent. How long is that condition of affairs going to last? . . . .

". . . . The most serious obligation which rests upon the Government and Parliament in connection with this Closer Settlement enterprise is the financial consideration, for if these enterprises grow wrong financially they will probably stop altogether. . . . I know that the point of difficulty which has presented itself to many men in authority in connection with land administration in this country, in regard to these closer settlement

proposals is the fact that the Crown would not be able to get an adequate rate of interest on leased land in view of the fact that there would be Crown tenants surrounding the closer settlement areas who would be holding their lands at a very much lower interest rate. . . . It is clear beyond all doubt (that in the case of) land available on a leasehold tenure, the lowest rental that the State can possibly be satisfied with is 4 per cent . . . . nobody would take up the Homestead Selection at 4 per cent if he could get a Conditional Purchase at 5 per cent . . . .

". . . . One of the reasons why I have changed my ideas from leasehold to alienation is that I believe the alienation system is likely to get a better value to the Crown than under the leasehold system. . . . The thing that depopularises the perpetual lease system with periodic reappraisements is the element of uncertainty which periodic reappraisement raises amongst the tenants . . . ."

(*Parliamentary Debates*, 17th November, 1904.)

CLOSER SETTLEMENT (AMENDMENT) ACT, 1906

In the later minor amendments of 1906, certain inconsistencies were corrected, provision being made, inter alia, fixing 40 acres as the maximum area which a person might have before being debarred from taking up land under the Closer Settlement Act. To cover the peculiar position which had arisen on Gobbagombalin and Marrar where share-farmers were already working the properties, provision was made to grant preferential rights to tenant farmers subject to Ministerial approval, whilst authority was also reserved to the Minister to modify at will the subdivision design of estates to be cut up for closer settlement. Again the Minister (Hon. James Ashton) emphasized in the Committee stages of the bill that:—

"The Committee must bear in mind that the object of these closer settlement resumptions was not primarily to find more land for men who already had land. It was to increase the number of settlers and it would be a very disappointing result if after the Crown had paid £100,000 or £200,000 for a large area of land it was discovered that the bulk of it was mopped up by persons already settled in the district and that no new settlement or very little new settlement (had resulted)."

CLOSER SETTLEMENT (AMENDMENT) ACT, 1907

Under the Closer Settlement (Amendment) Act of 1907 important changes of procedure were introduced in regard to the methods of acquiring private land for closer settlement purposes. The Act was framed with the object of facilitating and simplifying the process of acquisition. Its main provisions included power:—

(*a*) To create Advisory Boards, composed of members possessing special qualifications and experience in all matters appertaining to the use and value of land, whose duty it was to report to the Minister what private lands were suitable for Closer Settlement, and to supply full information in regard thereto, including values;

(*b*) to acquire lands within 15 miles of any approved new railway line, exclusive of the enhancement in value on account of such railway;

(*c*) to provide for the acquisition of parts of estates, where it was not expedient to take the whole;

(*d*) to make it optional in acquiring an estate whether any lands therein which were leased from the owner with the right of purchase, should be included.

Three Advisory Boards were appointed, one each for the Northern, Central-Western and Southern portions of the State embracing the whole of the Eastern and Central Territorial Divisions.

The impetus given to the work of Closer Settlement by the Act of 1907, and the consequent increase of business necessitated the establishment of a separate branch to deal exclusively with Closer Settlement matters within the Department of Lands. By specialising the work in this way it was anticipated that good results would follow.

Under the 1904 Act, previously, Clause 41 had provided for the constitution of a Closer Settlement Board to review individual cases, consisting of the "members of the local land board in the district concerned sitting conjointly as one tribunal with the members of the Land Appeal Court"—the six members, three members of the local land board plus three members of the Land Appeal Court, "obtaining thus both a local view and a general view".

THE FIRST ESTATES ACQUIRED—FURTHER PROGRESS OF CLOSER SETTLEMENT

By 1903, under the provisions of the 1901 Act which in effect "required the owner to be a willing vendor, and practically to take the initiative", twelve estates only had been considered. Of these, "one was declined, two were informal offers, one was withdrawn, in one the land was sold privately by the owner, and the remaining seven were indetermined"[104]. In 1904 ten further offers to surrender land were considered, but of these, seven were declined, two were withdrawn, and only one, *Myall Creek,* was approved and subsequently opened up for settlement in the following year (1905).[105] (Fig. 8.)

Experience up to this stage had fully justified the views expressed by Mr. Ashton, Minister for Lands, when in introducing the 1904 Amendment Act inserting the compulsory resumption clauses, he had emphasized that:—

> "No good purpose is served by blinking at the facts . . . . we should remember that the mere presence of compulsory provisions in this legislation will lend a very material aid indeed to negotiations between the Government and owners for the requisition of lands by means of purchase and sale . . . if the system depended entirely upon a voluntary arrangement between the Government and the owners of private land it would mean that the localities of settlement in the future would be dependent not upon the Government or the Parliament of the State . . . . but upon the private owners who were absolutely masters of the situation . . . ."
>
> (*Parliamentary Debates,* 24th November, 1904.)

As showing the unsuitability of most though not all of the 29 estates that had been offered to the Government (up to this stage 1904) these several estates were listed: Auburn Vale, Burbangate, Ben Lomond, Bannockburn, Glendon, Goonoo Goonoo, Hillview, Kiandra, Millbank,

[104] *Annual Report of the Department of Lands,* 1903.
[105] *Annual Report of the Department of Lands,* 1904.

Murrumbidgerie, Mimosa, Mount Cooper, Spring Flats, Myall Creek, Mt. Leonard, Milbrodale, Wombo, Nullomanna, Oakhurst, Old Berrigan and Ringwood, Pearsley Hall, Port Stephens, Quat Quatta, Richlands, Tilba, Wyoming, Warbreccan and an unnamed estate near Bathurst. Compared to the majority of these properties, the Minister described an alternative estate which he had in mind (the Peel River Estate) in these terms:—

> "I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that (the Peel River estate) would represent more to this country on resumption than any other resumption that could be undertaken . . . . and as it would offer a very large area indeed, it would furnish opportunities for a consolidated and concentrated settlement in one of the best districts . . . . such as is probably not offered by the existence of any other estate in New South Wales . . . . if powers of compulsory resumption were given me . . . . one of the first estates to be resumed would be the Peel River company.[106] (Fig. 11.)

Some brief details of a few of the early resumptions made serve to show the general procedure followed:—

Myall Creek Estate (near Inverell)

The purchase of this estate for closer settlement was approved by the Closer Settlement Act (1904). It was originally offered to the Government at £3 1s. 6d. per acre, but the local Land Board in recommending its purchase put forward a reduced price of £2 14s. 6d. per acre. It was ultimately purchased at £2 11s. 6d. per acre, was handed over to the Crown at the end of March, 1905, and became available to applicants in April, 1905. The area included in the estate was 54,000 (53,928½) acres to which was added before disposal about 12,000 acres of adjoining Crown land. By 1906, 50 Settlement Purchases comprising an area of 30,369 acres had been taken up within the closer settlement areas of the estate.[107] (Fig. 8.)

Gobbagombalin and Marrar Estates (Wagga)

During the 1905-6 year, 19 properties were placed under offer to the Government for purchase as Closer Settlement Areas. Of these it was decided to purchase only two, Gobbagombalin and Marrar. These two estates aggregating 88,474 acres were acquired from the owners in February and March, 1907. Both purchases were made subject to the approval of the Closer Settlement Board and the ratification of Parliament. The view expressed in the finding of the Closer Settlement Board was to the effect that Gobbagombalin had been purchased by the Crown for £30,000 less than its true market value and Marrar at £7,000 less. With remnants of adjoining Crown lands added, the area fully opened up for settlement totalled 91,000 acres, subdivided into 187 farms. Within two to three weeks of the farms being advertised, 182 had been applied for and allotted—144 to new settlers and 38 to persons previously share-farming on the properties. (Fig. 9 and 10.)

[106] Mr. James Ashton, Minister for Lands: *Parliamentary Debates* (24th November, 1904).

[107] *Annual Report of the Department of Lands*, 1907.

Dorrigo Lands

At the end of September, 1906, 31,651 acres of previously undeveloped Crown lands at Dorrigo were made available for Conditional Purchase Lease, the subdivision comprising 129 blocks. A second subdivision of 7,150 acres into 31 blocks ranging from 131½ to 392 acres was opened the following year (1907) and a third of 32,500 acres in 143 blocks with areas varying from 83 acres to 480 acres. The work of subdivision was protracted "since owing to dense vegetation, brush and heavy timber, ... surveying was exceedingly difficult and slow . . . . Surveyors also complained of great difficulty in getting labourers."

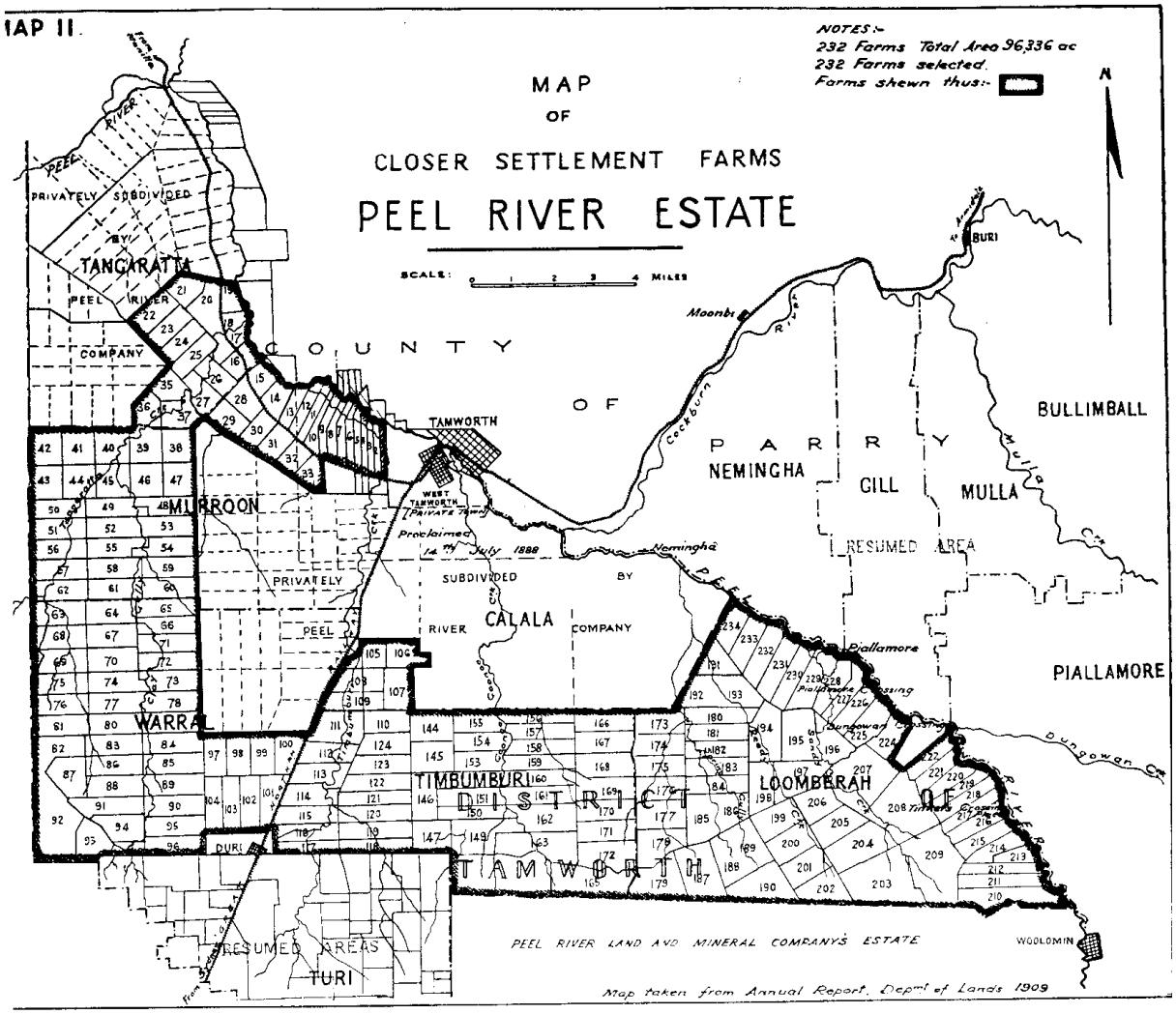

Fig. 11.—Map of Closer Settlement Farms in the Subdivision of the Peel River Estate.

Peel River Land and Mineral Company (Tamworth)

In 1906-1907 negotiations were entered into by the Lands Department with the Peel River Land and Mineral Company, owners of the Goonoo-Goonoo estate, with the result that 30,000 acres were privately subdivided and sold by the company. Notice at the same time was given the company of the Crown's intention to resume the remainder of the estate totalling 257,000 acres, and official surveys were commenced.

In 1908 an area of 99,618 acres was compulsorily resumed from the estate at a cost of £407,371 or approximately £4.2 per acre. This was the first compulsory acquisition by the Crown. The area resumed was divided into 214 farms and 75 working men's blocks, the farms ranging in area from 133 acres to 1,280 acres, and in capital value from £1,300 to £3,376. They were all selected in 1909 or thereabouts. (Fig. 11.)

It is of interest to note regarding this particular estate that in 1929, at the end of the first twenty years of settlement, a census showed that where the property before resumption had grazed 75,000 sheep, carried improvements valued at £22,500 and employed only a resident superintendent, a manager, about six boundary riders and their families, and station hands (about 40 persons in all), in 1929 the improvements were valued at £518,950, the population had increased to 1,571, and the livestock carried included 81,045 sheep, 4,847 head of cattle, 2,426 horses and 682 pigs, equivalent in sheep to about 117,000, notwithstanding that 40,000 acres were by then also being cultivated.

Under the Closer Settlement Act, 1904, which is still the main operative Act under which closer settlement has been implemented, large estates such as Piallaway (Quirindi), Larras Lake (Molong), Mungery (Peak Hill), Bibbenluke and Mahratta (Bombala), Tuppal (Finley), Crowther (Young), Brookong (Urana), Nangus (Gundagai), Hardwicke (Yass), Warrah (Murrurundi), Walla Walla (Albury), Richlands, Cole Park and Malton (Goulburn), Coreen and others, were in after years also acquired and subdivided.

In addition to the estates thus purchased or resumed by the government there were private subdivisions proceeding concurrently, but of these there is no readily available record. "It is a reasonable inference", stated the 1907 Report of the Department of Lands, "that a new era of land settlement has been entered into, and that under the infleuence of recent legislation, subdivision of large estates and the settlement of people thereon will proceed apace".

In these early years, particularly, intensive land settlement was taking place on the North Coast. The 1907 Report refers to the fact that "in the Grafton District the progress of settlement has been most marked, far exceeding that of any other district in the State" whilst in the following 1908 Report there is the further mention that "the North Coast continues to secure a far greater number of new settlers than any other district in the State". At the same time also, special attention was being paid to the Mallee and scrub lands in the Central and Western Divisions with a view to promoting agriculture or mixed farming, investigation also being made of the better utilisation of the snow country in the Eastern Division (Fig. 13).

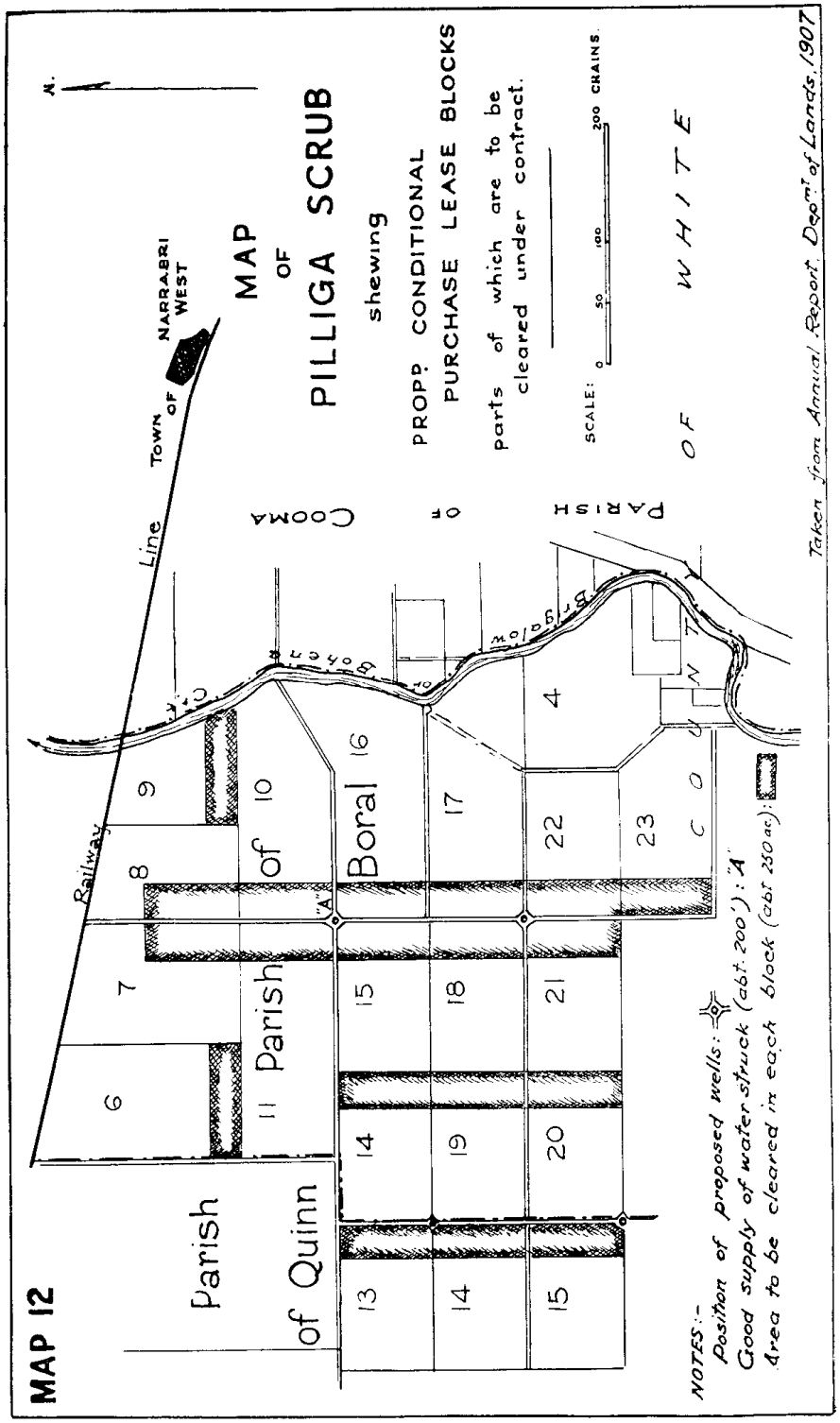

Fig. 12.—Pilliga Scrub—Map showing partial subdivision.

In 1909, of the ten estates covered by notices of intended acquisition during the previous year, six were acquired in whole or in part: Parts of Sunny Ridge, Boree Creek, Peel River, Brookong, and the whole of Coreen and Back Paddock and Mungery. At the same time also notices of intended acquisition were gazetted in respect of 18 other estates embracing an area of 394,127 acres—one of which Walla Walla had been already acquired. Of the seven estates thus acquired in 1909, Sunny Ridge, Walla Walla and Boree Creek were secured by voluntary purchase from the owners but in the case of the other four—Peel River, Mungery, Brookong and Coreen, and Back Paddock—compulsory resumptions were required.

In 1910, special attention was being paid to the necessity for making available for settlement all Crown lands within the influence of the railways. Undeveloped Crown lands such as the Pilliga Scrub and the Hillston-Wyalong area which it was proposed would be served by further railway extensions were also brought forward for design and survey (Fig. 12). A further seven estates were in this year also acquired: Crowther (10,521 acres), Larras Lake (11,566 acres, being a part only of the estate), North Logan (11,424 acres, partial acquisition), Everton (6,475 acres), Piallaway and Walhollow (12,396 acres, partial resumption), Richlands (8,709 acres) and Pine Ridge (7,845 acres, partial resumption). Three of these estates were compulsorily acquired (Crowther, Larras Lake and North Logan), while the remaining four were purchased by agreement with the owners. At the same time also notices of intended acquisition were gazetted in respect of a further 15 estates, covering an area of 358,765 acres, to be resumed and subdivided in due course (See Fig. 14).

In 1910, with the passage of the Closer Settlement Promotion Act, provision was made for the first time for a process of land subdivision supplementary to that provided for under the Closer Settlement Acts. By these new promotion provisions, any three or more qualified persons could enter into an agreement with a private owner to purchase land at a negotiated price and then seek Crown ratification. (Provision was made in these cases for the Minister to cause a valuation to be made jointly by the Government Savings Bank and the Closer Settlement Advisory Board, a defined limit being placed upon the amount of the loan to be advanced.)

From 1904 to 1919 settlement progressed mainly under these two methods—(*a*) Parliamentary acquisition by agreement with the owner; (*b*) Closer Settlement Promotion provisions. There were various amending Acts, and that of 1912 introduced a new feature by providing for resumption of lessees' interest in Long Term Leases, under which 64 leases aggregating 564,695 acres were acquired. At the end of 1918, the total area of purchases and resumptions amounted to 1,713,757 acres, providing 3,327 settlers at a cost of £5,176,376. This may be said to end the era of Closer Settlement proper, and the Fund available for these purposes was at this time in a healthy condition. "Settlement was proceeding on a sound and solid basis and there was nothing spectacular —the successes at that stage far outweighed the few failures."[108]

[108] Department of Lands—unpublished statement.

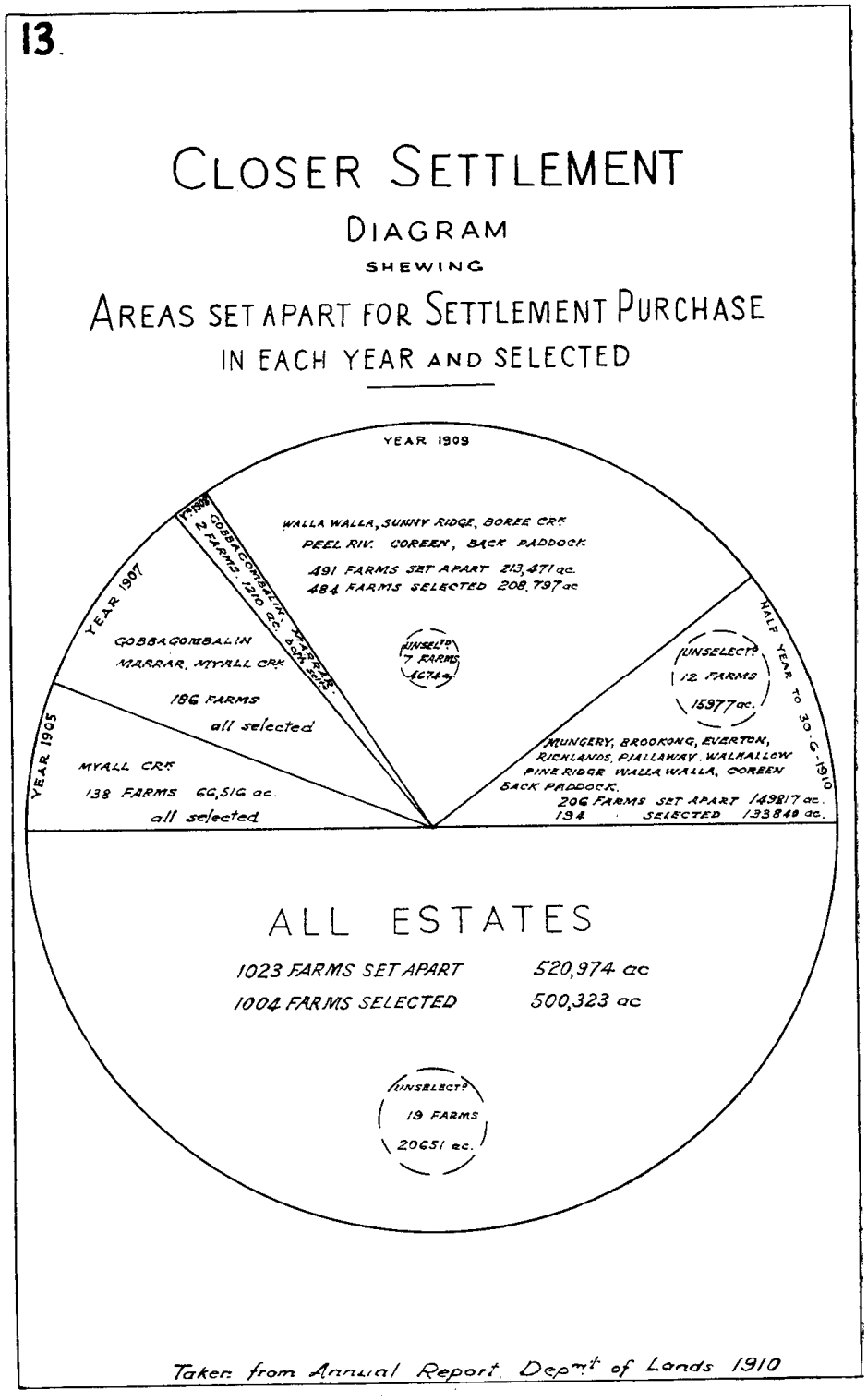

Fig. 13.—Diagram of Closer Settlement Developments.

During the past thirty-odd years, civilian closer settlement has occupied only a minor place. In 1919 the unexpectedly rapid demobilisation of returned soldiers whose repatriation was necessary, threw a tremendous strain on the State. "In all too many cases the impossible was expected, the Press and public agitation demanding expedition, it being feared also that failure to absorb these men into the industrial life of the community might have led to serious results." Because the Closer Settlement Acts offered the more readily available machinery at the moment, they were loaded with commitments never contemplated, and there has since been some confusion between Soldier Settlement and Closer Settlement proper. Largely, soldier settlement after the 1914-18 war was achieved with single farms and small group acquisitions under the so-called Closer Settlement Promotion Provisions, and the holdings were also mainly disposed of as Settlement Purchases. A number of large estates were, however, acquired for soldiers' settlement and made available as Soldiers Group Purchases under Section 4B of the Returned Soldiers Settlement Act, 1916.[108]

Since 1945 the whole of the acquisitions under the Closer Settlement Acts by agreement or resumption are being devoted, at least for the time being, to the settlement of ex-servicemen under the War Service Land Settlement Act, 1941. The principal controversy has concerned not the rights of the Crown to acquire and reserve land for closer settlement —a right which by Privy Council judgment is incontestable—but the method of arriving at the price to be paid to owners of such land.

Since the inception of closer settlement in New South Wales over fifty years ago, 2,479 estates have been acquired and sub-divided at a cost for land of £30,213,100. In this way, including soldier settlement

[108] "During the three peak years—1919, 1920 and 1921—the Closer Settlement Board's recommendations under Promotion provisions totalled 1,266,472 acres, and in addition there were nine estates comprising 206,160 acres acquired by Parliamentary sanction on the Board's recommendation, this making a total of 1,472,632 acres. It was always recognised that a Closer Settlement Board should not only personally inspect and value, but be responsible for the buying. There is a marked difference between valuing and buying. In the rush years 1919-1921, when delay would not be tolerated, this became humanly impossible. For example, in 1920, 881 properties were acquired under Promotion provisions only. This is the equivalent of 2½ per diem, ex Sundays, and all over the State. Consequently, smaller propositions were dealt with by joint valuers, whose reports were carefully reviewed . . . Average price £4 10s. 3d. per acre (improved properties), average farm area 508 acres. Corresponding figures for Victoria (by published report) were £7 7s. per acre, and average farm area 225 acres. But, whereas the average capital value per farm in Victoria was £1,794, those in New South Wales, under the Closer Settlement Acts, averaged £2,290, due to the larger area allotted per settler. . . . About 170 local committees were appointed in New South Wales to review offers and supply estimates . . . The Closer Settlement Advisory Board was enabled to acquire at a reduction of £415,550 below local estimates. This is applicable merely to Board operations for three years only . . . And the fact that local estimates invariably became known was a drawback . . . At the inception of Closer Settlement, the Carruthers-Ashton Government earmarked £2,000,000 for a Fund, free of interest. The idea was that as the scheme matured, the rental revenue coming in would suffice to keep a live policy moving, and, but for the intervention of soldier settlement, would in all probability have done so. In 1919 the Fund was in a healthy condition, and I have always understood that about 1930 it was something like over £1,250,000 in credit. But it was (and is) so involved with other funds that it is difficult for other than an expert to disentangle . . ." (*A. H. Chesterman Report*, 13th July, 1936).

schemes of both 1914-18 and 1939-45 wars, land totalling 6,744,047 acres has provided 11,288 farms. Of these 11,288 farms the respective periods of development have been:

1905-1923	6,783 farms settled
To 30th June, 1946	9,154 farms settled
To 30th June, 1955	11,288 farms settled

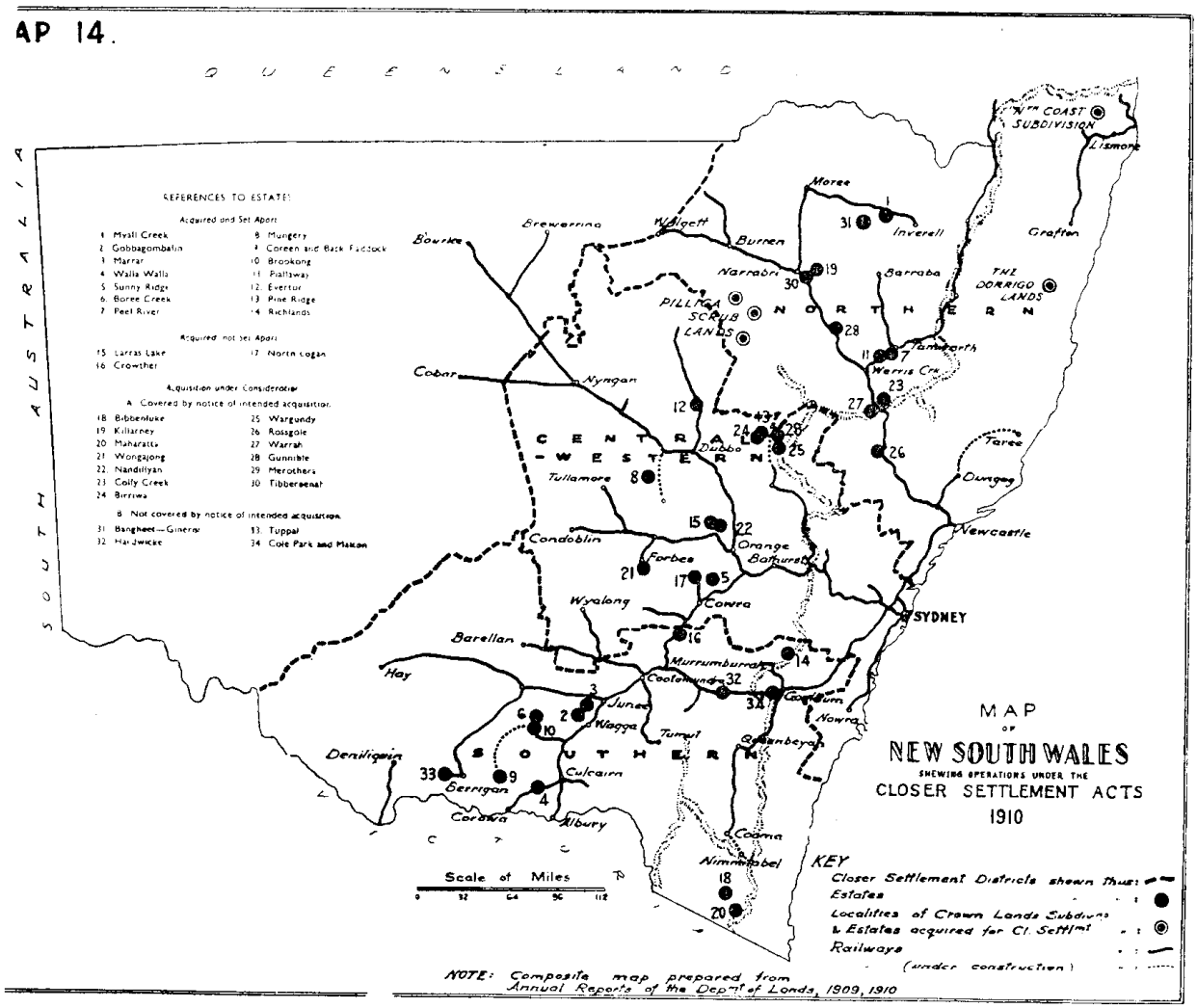

Fig. 14.—Map of New South Wales showing operations under the Closer Settlement Acts, 1910.

CLOSER SETTLEMENT TENURES

The *Settlement Purchase* is the principal tenure under the Closer Settlement Acts. It is possibly equally as well known as the older *Conditional Purchase*. The two are much alike. They are both purchases from the Crown under conditions, including the payment of a deposit, payment of annual instalments, five years' residence, and the effecting of improvements, with a Crown Grant to issue upon fulfilment of the conditions and the completion of the purchase. The essential difference is that the Conditional Purchase is taken up out of "Crown Lands", while the Settlement Purchase embraces "acquired" lands, or, in other words, lands which have been alienated by the Crown, but subsequently re-acquired by it—either by resumption or purchase—from the private owners.

The *Soldiers' Group Purchase* was the creation of an Act of 1917 and it, too, comprises "acquired" lands and in essence is like the Settlement Purchase.

Prior to the depression legislation of 1932, annual instalments payable to the Crown in respect of Settlement Purchases and Soldiers Group Purchases varied between 5 per cent and 6½ per cent inclusive of interest which varied between 4 per cent and 5½ per cent. During the depression (1932) the annual instalment of purchase money payable on these holdings was reduced to a uniform rate of 4 per cent per annum. The 1932 Act further provided for a 22½ per cent reduction of interest for a period of three years, but this period was successively extended to a total of fifteen years.

1937.—In the 1937 Act, and with the object of assisting settlers in the early years of their occupation, during which time improvements have to be effected, stock purchased and plant acquired, further substantial concessions were provided requiring that interest only had to be paid (as distinct from a 5 per cent instalment) during the first five years at a very low rate of 1 per cent for the first year, 2 per cent for the second year, 2½ per cent for the third year, 3 per cent for the fourth year, and 3½ per cent for the fifth year. Thereafter an annual instalment of 5 per cent of the capital value is payable, including interest at 4 per cent on the outstanding balance.

1938.—A further important change was made in the law by the Closer Settlement (Amendment) Act, 1938. This measure made provision whereby lands might be made available for Settlement Purchase subject to a special condition that the applicant was to furnish an undertaking with his application that he would apply to the Rural Bank, if directed to do so by the Minister, for the maximum amount which the Bank was prepared to give him on the security of a mortgage (or mortgages) over the farm, and apply the whole of such advance in payment of the moneys owing by him in respect of the Settlement Purchase. The settler enjoyed the benefit of the 1937 Act in that he was liable for payment of interest only during the first five years of his occupancy, at the rates prescribed by that Act, and, in effect, the Crown had to subsidise the Rural Bank to the extent of the difference between such rates and the Bank rate of interest. Eight estates were set apart during 1938 and 1939 in this way, viz.: Munderoo West (Tumbarumba district), Gumin (Tooraweenah), Tralee (Trundle), Barooga

(Corowa), Munyapla (Henty), Bald Blair (Guyra), Piallaway (Quirindi), and Beaufort (Glen Innes). The Rural Bank advanced £429,802 to 109 Settlement Purchases on these estates, and it is to be noted that in 1950, the 1943 Act was amended to extend to these holders, also, the right to apply for conversion to leases in perpetuity, subject to conditions appropriate to this particular group.

1943.—In the Closer Settlement Amendment (Conversion) Act, 1943, further important changes were made. These included provision for the conversion of *Settlement Purchases* and *Soldiers' Group Purchases* into leases in perpetuity and the creation of a new tenure—the *Closer Settlement Lease,* which is also a lease in perpetuity. In introducing this amendment, the Minister (Hon. J. M. Tully) gave as the reason for the Government's action that:

> "For a long time settlers on these classes of holdings (Settlement Purchase Lease and Group Purchase Lease) have sought an amendment of the law to enable them to convert to a lease in perpetuity. They have complained that the annual instalment of 5 per cent. of the capital value is too great a commitment to meet. The demand has been fairly widespread. The agitation became more pronounced with the depression and with the right given to Crown lessees generally by the Act of 1932 to extend their leases to leases in perpetuity. It is not, therefore, a new proposition, but one that has been put forward by settlers themselves and their organisations for some years, particularly over the last ten years or so, when Settlement and Group Purchasers, in common with other landholders, have been looking for means of reducing the commitments in the face of financial stringency and the low prices obtainable for their products."

There was no escape from the setting up of further new tenures under the Act, since there was involved something altogether new to the law, namely, the conversion of a purchase of "acquired" land into a lease in perpetuity. Appropriately, the new leases were named in the Act as *Settlement Purchase Leases* and *Group Purchase Leases,* the Act also creating a third tenure to be known as *Closer Settlement Leases.*

Instead of heavy annual repayments of purchase price, the conversion provisions set out that the new basis for annual rent would be either: (*a*) $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of the settler's debt on his Land Purchase Account; or (*b*) $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of an amount equivalent to the fair market value of the property, whichever was the lesser. In other words, rent was to be based on debt, but no settler who converted was to be required to pay a rent in excess of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of the fair market value of his farm. Since there are roughly three classes of settlers—firstly, those who owe to the Crown less than the capital value of their holding; secondly, those who owe more than the capital value of their holding, but less than what would be its fair market value; and thirdly, those (probably about 5 per cent of the total) who owe to the Crown an amount which exceeds the fair market value—payment of the excess debt would have to be waived by the Crown in the cases last mentioned.

THE DESTINY OF THE INLAND

The transformation of public and official opinion in the nineties and early 1900's as to the real character of the inland (not the "claptrap of the theorists") proceeded side by side with the development of the wheat industry. It was an inevitable and self-accelerating progression, success engendering further success, after the early years of trial and

experiment. Once profitable means of farming were demonstrated, the cause of closer settlement could not be withstood, and it is but a step from 1904, when the first Closer Settlement Act was introduced in New South Wales, to 1914, when Australia was "precipitated into nationhood" with the outbreak of World War I. The changes in these ten years, as in the ten or fifteen years before 1904, were in the agricultural sense "revolutionary," for it was within these years that New South Wales was converted from "one vast sheep walk" into an agricultural state.

As indicative, however, of the problems and controversies involved in the course of these changes, the following extract from an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (10th October, 1904) is highly relevant:—

"Wheat and Wool

"Opinions as to the destiny of the arable inland areas of New South Wales have undergone a striking change during the past 15 years. Fifteen years ago most of the men who knew the country outside the dividing ranges, were fighting the fast-coming idea that the State was destined to become largely agricultural. Probably the prejudice against the acquisitive persistent selector was to some extent responsible for the attitude of men who were prone to declare that it would prove as feasible to distil sunbeams from cucumbers as to raise wheat and other farm produce on wide areas which now carry prosperous farmers and their families. The fight put up by the large holders for the purely pastoral side very seriously affected the whole scheme of settlement. It was easy to persuade the authorities that certain lands could never be successfully farmed, and the result is that the best settlements in the Central Division are little more than patches among the large holdings still devoted to working out the solely pastoral destiny of New South Wales. The cruel part of the business was in the action of the Lands Department which ensued upon much of the country having been proved suitable for wheat and sheep farming. When the pressure came, and it was found that the lands which were most suitably situated had been sacrificed to the old-established belief that the country was designed by nature for a sheep walk, other lands were offered which were most unfavourably situated. So keen was the demand for land that selectors were found to take up holdings for farms outside the danger line, and the unfortunate position of these settlers has been discreditable to the country ever since. Their failures and comparative failures have also been quoted freely to support the theory that New South Wales has no agricultural destiny, a course which, to say the least of it, is highly creditable to the nerve of those whose transactions with the Lands Department caused the settlers to be forced out of country upon which they would have had every chance of succeeding. Some developments in this connection would have been amusing had the interests of the country been less seriously involved. For instance, a holder secured an exchange on the ground that the land he was willing to give up was suitable for closer settlement, while that which he wished to secure was pastoral country only. No change of any consequence occurred in the district before the same holder subdivided the land he had received into farms and offered it for sale in that form, with a reserve on each block, amounting to about treble the price at which the land was valued for the purpose of exchange.

"Evidences of the pernicious influence of the theory upon land settlement are numerous and striking enough to render an explanation necessary when renewed attempts are made to prove that farming in the districts where sheep and wool are the leading products is commercially impossible. Mr. W. E. Abbott recently put forward in this column a new theory to the effect that wheatgrowing is possible only because the railway department 'subsidises' the industry to the tune of £800,000 a year. Presumably Mr. Abbott assumes that the growers are charged £800,000 less every year than they should pay in freights. The beauty of such a statement as this lies in its exactness. The wheat produced each year varies to the extent of several millions of bushels, but Mr. Abbott's 'subsidy' is apparently inelastic, and

must be paid to the last penny every twelve months. The position again proves that it is always dangerous to fix anything. The wheat crop this season will total about 18 million bushels, which at nine bags to the ton, the measurement allowed on the railways, means 500,000 tons of wheat. Of this some two million bushels, to be used for seed, will not be carried by rail, while a further large quantity will be delivered at local mills without going on rail. However, if the total 500,000 tons be taken as being transported on the lines the freight on the whole would not amount to more than one-third of the sum stated by Mr. Abbott. In order that the wheat industry should add another £800,000 to the railway revenue, it would be necessary to increase freights by some two-thirds of the present rates. The wheatgrowers would then, in an average season, contribute about one-third of the value of their produce to the railways for carrying the grain.

"Mr. Abbott belongs to that class of prosperous Australian who can always find good things to say about the management of affairs in every country save his own. Some months ago he told us that, compared with the freights charged on produce carried in America by railway companies, those in New South Wales were outrageously high. Now he informs us that the wheat industry, which is far and away our largest purely agricultural line, exists only because the produce pays £800,000 a year less to the railways than it should contribute. So it seems that our railway rates on produce are too high to allow the farmers to prosper, and at the same time the industry only exists because they are two-thirds lower than the sums which should be exacted. The position set up by our correspondent is characteristic of the arguments brought forward for class purposes. We are expected to understand that Mr. Abbott believes that some wonderful concessions have been made to the wheatgrowers, while wool and other pastoral produce has received no assistance whatever. The non-paying lines in pastoral districts, the sidings made to accommodate one squatter only, the preferential freights to draw business to Sydney, the deep reductions on the freight for starving stock, and on fodder for the same stock, are all supposed to have escaped attention in order that the writer might make out a case against the smaller settler and his industry. Still straining his point Mr. Abbott takes further risks, and sets forth that many abandoned buildings which long since tumbled down bear testimony to the assertion that wheatgrowing cannot be permanently profitable. Then again the public is asked to assume that Mr. Abbott is ignorant of the fact that the greater number of the so-called homesteads sheltered squatters' dummies until the squatters secured the land, and were then either moved to other dummied lands or allowed to rot. As a matter of natural progress, some settlers have sold out to others, the areas having been too small in the first place, while it is also clear that in this as in all other countries some settlement was tried in unsuitable districts.

"The striking point, however, is that in many districts the bona-fide settlers have remained, and the population on the land has increased and prospered alongside the large properties on which may be seen the remnants of the dwellings of the dummies. On one side of the fence is the sheep walk with its population of one boundary rider to 10,000 acres, and on the other numbers of families occupying in a fairly comfortable way an area of similar extent. Another very remarkable feature of the situation is the attitude of numbers of large holders, who have enjoyed to the full opportunities for proving that the old theory is correct. Instead of keeping on showing that pastoral operations are the only reliable friend of the settler these large men long since entered into wheatgrowing on the shares system. If Mr. Abbott's much-spurred stalking horse had a leg to stand upon the estate-holders who have grown wheat should have made a very bad business of the undertaking. In place of this they are extending their operations, and it is an open secret that several were enabled, through their profits from wheatgrowing, to release themselves from serious financial straits into which they were plunged by adhering to the idea that their country could furnish nothing but pastoral products. Under the conditions set up as the ideal of the large holders to whom agriculture is anathema, not a drop of milk, a pound of butter, or a feed for a horse could be found on country which now carries thousands of wheatgrowers and their families, and enables them to lead a rational existence. The latest absurdity put forward in the hope of proving that the inland agricultural areas should be rejoined to the enormous holdings

from which they were wrenched by a desperate fight under the banner, 'Unlock the land,' runs to the effect that agriculture may be carried on by subsidising the farmers through their machinery supplies. If a duty be put on harvesters so that the machine may be made here, Mr. Abbott describes the proceeding as a subsidy to the farmers who, by the way, are compelled to pay a considerable share of the duty.

"Probably the statements referred to will be regarded by practical men who know the country as being of no particular consequence, but it should not be forgotten that it is this kind of unsupported assertion which has frequently carried weight when a strong demand has arisen for farm lands under the Crown. Shortly a supreme effort will be made by the Farmers and Settlers' Association and by various people to have some of the good farming country which has been locked up in improvement leases, resumed and made available for closer settlement. It is therefore most necessary that the fact should be recognised that the area devoted to combined wheat and sheep farming could be increased tenfold with great advantage to all concerned if only the good land were brought within reach of those who are perpetually seeking for holdings, so that they might join the ranks of the producers."

(*cf.* also Appendices VIIX.)

CLOSER SETTLEMENT AND IMMIGRATION

The average net immigration to Australia from 1861 to 1891 was 24,714 a year, and from 1891 to 1900, a paltry 2,487 a year. From 1901 to 1905—that is, for the five years immediately preceding the adoption of a policy of assisted immigration—there was actually a net loss by emigration of 3,358 persons a year. Australia in these years found itself losing population to Great Britain at the rate of some thousands a year, at a time when its own developmental needs were enormous.

It was under these circumstances that in 1906 Sir Joseph Carruthers established in New South Wales the first of the new Immigration Departments of Australia, Mr. T. A. (later Sir Timothy) Coghlan being appointed as the State's representative in England. About 1880, previously, there had been a policy of State-aided immigration in at least one of the States, but after a short trial, this policy had been discontinued in 1882. For the following twenty-odd years, the movement had laid dormant until resurrected in 1906. Victoria quickly followed New South Wales' example in "a burst of enthusiasm to finance big schemes for attracting the right sort of people." Queensland, Western Australia, and later South Australia, followed in their turn. By 1913, practically every State had some form of immigration organisation in London—New South Wales and Victoria working together under one roof in a joint-State office. The Commonwealth also entered the field, and by a publicity campaign conducted through the High Commissioner's Office in London, materially assisted the movement. Under the policy adopted, the Commonwealth confined its energies to advertising the resources of Australia, conditions of settlement and social aspects, and the "opportunities and advantages offered to immigrants". The States for their part assumed the responsibility of selecting immigrants of a desirable class, of making provision for their reception on arrival, and of placing them in suitable employment.

Assisted immigrants fell into two classes—those selected by the Immigration officials in England, and those "nominated" by friends or relatives living in Australia. The former class embraced almost exclusively

farmers, farm labourers and domestic servants, the latter including artisans, miners, manual workers and certain other classes of tradesmen.

As a partial result of these measures, the net gain in population for the succeeding six years (1906-1911) was 172,712, or a yearly average of 28,785. The greater proportion of these immigrants were unassisted and paid the full passage money:

Immigration into Australia

Year	Net Immigration	Assisted Immigration	Unassisted Immigration
1906	2,865	1,589	1,276
1907	12,514	5,169	7,345
1908	13,150	6,519	6,631
1909	28,933	9,820	19,013
1910	37,547	16,781	20,766
1911	77,703	39,741	37,962
1912 (6 mths.)	43,785	18,271	25,514

Averaging the contributions of the various State Governments towards the fare of assisted immigrants at, say, £6 per head, the cost to the governments totalled about £587,000, or £90,000 per annum for the six and one-half years, 1906-1911.

To the prospective immigrant, a pleasant picture of virtually unlimited resources and an abundance of land calling for development was painted through the Immigration Offices, emphasis being placed upon the opportunities provided by "Closer Settlement" policies in all the Australian States. Meantime, "the British Government (had) stood aside and watched, with little more than idle curiosity, the efforts of the young Colonies to clothe their skeletons with blood and flesh and muscle. The Colonial Office . . . (had) brought into existence a Department originally intended as a wholesome warning to immigrants but which . . . (had) gradually evolved into an instrument for directing British migrants to British territory overseas rather than to foreign lands."

In writing of this lag in immigration to Australia, Sir Robert Garran had this to say in 1914:

> "It has often been a puzzle to Australians—travelled and untravelled—why the obvious attractions which this country offers in the way of climate, resources, industrial opportunities, and social conditions, have not drawn hither a larger share of the emigration from the Old World. Of all the comparatively empty spaces on earth, Australia has always seemed to us, and ought surely to seem to others, by far the most desirable.
>
> "We are apt to underestimate the factor of distance. Australia and New Zealand are, to Europe, the Antipodes; and that is a more awe-inspiring word in the other hemisphere than in this. Australia, whatever the geographers may say, is further from Europe than Europe is from Australia. In our magnificent disregard of distances, we hardly realise what a momentous adventure a journey to Australia still seems to an individual or a household that is on the look-out for a new home. Canada and America beckon with open arms and enticing advertisements; one can travel there in fewer days than Australia demands weeks, for a fare that may be reckoned in florins, whereas Australia asks sovereigns. And those shorter journeys do not seem so irrevocable; it is easy to come "back from Philadelphia in the morning'—but back from the Antipodes is a more problematical undertaking.

"Doubtless, in these days of rapid transit, the obstacle of distance is less than it was, and the tide of immigration has been steadily setting this way; in fact, it has been pouring in pretty nearly as fast as the available shipping would allow—but not fast enough for our needs. . . .

"The rapid extension of agricultural settlement will depend on the success which attends the efforts to deal with two main problems, as to neither of which can it be said that any thoroughly satisfactory solution is yet forthcoming. The first is to make the land readily accessible to the small farmer. There is, perhaps, no question to which more attention has been given; but we still hear complaints of the land crying for the tiller, and the tiller crying for the land. The second problem is to deal with the conditions of rural labour, so as to make it both attractive to the workers and remunerative to the employers. Unions and industrial tribunals, which have done so much to improve the position of town workers, have a new and difficult task in applying their methods to rural work, so as to secure throughout the year reasonable regularity of employment, reasonable wages and conditions of living for the workers, and reasonable returns to the employers. On the one hand the conservatism of the farmers and their distaste for unionism and all its works, and on the other the tendency of the men to model their claims more closely on the rigid precedents of town occupations than the variability of rural conditions will allow, have been a difficulty. But the difficulty has to be faced if the agricultural industry is to make the most of the opportunity that is before it; and if it is faced in a reasonable spirit, there is every ground for believing that agriculture in Australia will be able to keep pace with the combined forward movement. . . .

"It so happens that, just when we are being tried in the test of war, we are caught also in the grip of a great drought. Perhaps the coincidence is not unfortunate for us. It may teach us a lesson of inestimable value. The lesson that surely has sunk deep into the hearts of the Australian people during the last few months is that it behoves us, as a people, to be strong enough not merely to grasp the easy prosperity which has been ours in the past, but to face adversity when it comes, as is the way with adversity, from all quarters at once.

"The lesson is, first, that to be strong against all chances we must develop in all directions; that we must extend the variety of our activities till we feel ourselves able, if need be—if temporarily cut off from intercourse with the outside world—to rely on our own resources, and so be a source of strength and not weakness to our friends, and of danger to our foes.

"Second, that, whether in war or peace, a vital element of strength is numbers—a population adequate to develop our vast resources continuously, and to defend them when necessary."

(R. R. Garran: "Australia after the War"—Article in *Australia To-day*, 10th Dec., 1914, pp. 47-57.)

In the competition for immigrants in these immediate pre-1914 years, New South Wales advertised itself as "A Land of Freedom and Opportunity", Victoria as "The Irrigation State", Queensland as "The Second Largest State of the Commonwealth with millions of acres of rich land to offer the Settler", South Australia as "The State for Outdoor Life, Crisis-Proof and Promising", Western Australia as the State "Where the Future Looms Larger than Ever", Tasmania as "The Island State—A Land of Comfort and Plenty". And to the settler coming to New South Wales there was this direct official appeal:

"Awaiting cultivation is 17,000,000 acres of wheat land. Much of it is privately owned, but sales are frequent, and the Government is constantly making fresh areas of Crown lands available for settlers on easy and liberal terms of sale or lease. Experienced men with little capital may obtain a good start by share-farming, a system under which owners let their land to farmers, fenced, and ready for the plough, in return for half the crop . . . New South Wales welcomes immigrants. They must be white, healthy, and willing to work. If they are without capital, agricultural workers and domestic servants are preferred. Men and women of the right stamp the Government will assist by paying portion of their passage money, and helping them to find employment."