Closer settlement

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A suggestion was made by Mr. R. H. Cabbage (Past President) that the Federal Capital site be named "Millewa." Messrs. McDonnough and Peake both spoke on the matter, and it was decided to postpone the discussion until next meeting, so as to give members a further opportunity of suggesting a suitable name for the Federal City.

Mr. G. L. Wilkins then read his paper entitled "Planetary Laws and Evolution," and was accorded a hearty vote of thanks.

The next General Meeting will be held on Tuesday, 17th May, when a paper by Mr. N. Chalmers, Assoc. M. Inst. C. E., will be read, entitled "Railway Location in New South Wales, Cape Colony, and the Gold Coast of West Africa: Some notes on, and comparisons of, systems and methods in these countries."

Closer Settlement.

(Paper by J. F. CAMPBELL, read at a Meeting of the Institution of Surveyors, N.S.W., Tuesday, 19th April, 1910.)

AS further discussion is invited on the subject of Closer Settlement, as embodied in the paper read by Mr. Miller at the December meeting of the Institute, and being unable to take part personally in proceedings, I beg to submit the following few remarks for the consideration of the meeting in conjunction with those of members.

Apart from the interests or concerns of surveyors the subject is deeply interesting from a national point of view, and affords ample scope for the exercise of speech in the exchange of ideas.

Closer settlement is one of the instinctive tendencies of the human race, hence our populous towns and cities. Our savage ancestors combined for mutual defence, as well as for socialistic purposes, and we naturally follow along similar converging paths. On the other hand populous communities disrupt by reason of restrictions of one kind or another, and colonisation is the result. These opposing movements are not peculiar to the human race alone, but permeate animate and so-called inanimate matter down to the invisible atoms, whose movements are regulated by the similar centripetal and centrifugal forces of the physicist.

In framing laws for the control of public movements, our legislators are supposed to keep in view the natural propensities of the race, and with regard to a closer settlement policy, a full knowledge of the operations of similar policies, governed by the natural laws of supply and demand in the densely populated countries of Europe and elsewhere, is absolutely necessary, so that the tentative legislation peculiar to our Parliaments may, at least to a certain extent, be obviated by the fuller knowledge suggested, and progress thereby accelerated.

In approaching the subject with a view to suggest measures of a legislative character, a practical acquaintance with the industries sought to be developed is of first importance, but as such is not always practicable, the experiences of successful farmers, dairymen, and agriculturists generally, if carefully sifted, should greatly aid the intelligent lawmaker in equating his theoretical measures with practical results.

In the allotment of land we all agree that one of the more difficult problems requiring solution is the "living area," or the income necessary to maintain a comfortable home, and he who would solve the question will have to face a subject bristling with diverse opinions and weighted with the irregularities displayed in productive ability.

The simple classification of the land on an economic basis can readily be adjusted to the requirements of the various industries, and with due consideration the limitation of areas may possibly be made to conform with the wants of individuals, under a system of pre-applications. Some of our best farmers are poor men, and are unable to show a banking account sufficiently large to meet the expenses required to stock and implement a maximum area, and provide the necessities of living during the probationary stage of farming on virgin soils. Special provision should be made for such, under regulations made applicable after due inquiry, and permission subsequently granted to increase by purchase up to the recognised area.

Considerable elasticity is desirable in the framing of laws intended to promote and regulate closer settlement, and this particular phase of re-alienation should be placed under the control of a Board with ample powers to deal with cases on their merits.

With regard to the purchase of properties considered suitable for closer settlement the business methods adopted by private agents should be closely followed, and this can only be satisfactorily effected by the Crown through the medium of a Board, for obvious reasons.

It is now fully recognised by all parties that increased settlement is necessary to the safety of the Commonwealth, and the efforts of our legislative representatives in that direction should receive our mutual sympathy and support, as, alas for human nature, the selfish motives of the individual all too frequently infringe with disastrous effect upon the interests of the community at large, hence the necessity for obscurity, at least, in the business transactions.

(Paper by H. NEWTON SCOTT, read at a Meeting of the Institution of Surveyors, N.S.W., Tuesday, 19th April, 1910.)

There is one very important matter that is being lost sight of, in dealing with the lands in the Eastern Division, which may be interesting to the members of the Institute, and which may, by your influence, be remedied.

On the Northern Rivers, such as the Manning, Barnard, Nowendoc, and others, there are many thousands of acres of hilly country, which is really classed as no man's land, and the longer our present land laws remain passive to the subject, the greater will be the loss to the State.

At present the eyes or small areas of flat or undulating ground is being selected, and the hills or mountains left, and do not bring in a penny of revenue to the State; but if special areas ranging from 1000 to 2000 acres were surveyed, and put up for lease, all our mountainous country would readily be taken up, and in thirty years would be a very valuable asset, and would form many thousands of homes by the willing and rising generation.

At present these mountains are in many places partly covered with dense brush, in others, though steep, have good open timber, and magnificent soil. If the method I propose to deal with this country is adopted,

there are thousands of our young men willing to take up these lands; would make a start to clear the mountains, sow paspalum grass and make a splendid cattle run, instead of as now a hiding place for dingoes, making it impossible for sheep to be grazed there.

The method I propose to be adopted is:—

1st. The District Surveyor from his parish maps can very easily mark out the areas to be set aside as special areas.

2nd. Blocks of land comprising 1000 to 2000 acres to be surveyed before selection.

3rd. The applicant to pay the survey fee when making application.

4th. The applicant to hold the land under lease for thirty years, with the right of purchase at the expiration of that time, under the following conditions:—

- (a) The first five years free of rent, but a certain amount of noxious scrub and useless timber to be destroyed—the area to be fixed by the Land Board—on penalty of forfeiture.
- (b) The second five years the rental to be fixed at 3d. per acre.
- (c) The rental to be 6d. per acre for the next ten years, and at its expiration the applicant to be informed by the Land Board that the cash value of the land will be so much at the end of his thirty years' lease.
- (d) The rental for the next ten years to be 9d. per acre, with the right to purchase at any time before the expiration of the lease or at its termination.
- (e) In case of forfeiture all improvements to revert to the Crown.
- (f) The lease not transferable, except by death, or as provided for by Land Acts.

Holders of small selections to be permitted to increase their holdings from 320 acres to 1000 or 2000 acres in these special areas.

It will be apparent that a young man with very little capital, but who has plenty of energy, will soon find a means of destroying the scrub, and will soon have paspalum grass growing on it and have some dry cattle fattening on it, and in order to protect his own interests will find a means to fence his land. At the expiration of his first five years he will be in a good position to pay his rent for the next five years. When that time has arrived he will be in a fair way to finance, so as to improve his holding and stock, and will have a comfortable home erected. At the expiration of his twenty years' lease we will find him a well-to-do man, having made what is now worthless country a splendid cattle farm.

It will cause the dairying interests to prosper in the locality.

Closer settlement, with all its advantages, will cause good roads to be made, and many other benefits to the farmer.

At the expiration of thirty years these mountains, which are now useless, and worse than useless, will be worth from £3 to £5 per acre, and the many thousands of acres to be purchased at that price will swell the Government exchequer considerably.

There are numbers of young men ready and willing to take up the land on similar conditions to the foregoing, and would be wealthy men in fifteen to twenty years, but being confined to 320 acres, and probably getting out of them only 10 to 100 acres of flat country, they do not see their way to make a start.

Has it ever dawned on the Lands Department what revenue is ever likely to be returned from the mountainous country after the eyes or flat spots have been picked out? Each year that is allowed to slip by, the task of disposing of these mountains becomes worse, and our young, energetic men are blocked from making future homes.

I trust that some abler pen may take up this subject for the good of Australia generally.

Mr. CHARD said opinion in the country was very much divided as to whether it was better to get land from the owners direct, with an absolutely free leg to deal with it, or from the Government with the restrictions surrounding it. The residence conditions, he knew, were a great drawback in many cases, preventing men with families from taking up land. The conditions of transfer, also, were very awkward. However, the Government was to be congratulated upon the forward movement made during the last few years.

Mr. MILLER, in reply, said the scheme he had put forward was designed for dealing with private lands only, and was a compromise between the present Government's policy and the Labour Party's graduated land tax scheme. His objection to the graduated land tax was that the tax must be upon the value of land all over Australia. His scheme would only take the land for closer settlement. The hardest point to get over was the question of valuation, and he admitted it would be a problem to get a simple system that would entirely obviate litigation.

Mr. Miller was accorded a vote of thanks for his paper, as were also Messrs. Campbell and Scott for their contributions on the subject.

Naming the Federal City.

THIS question was brought forward by Mr. R. H. Cambage, who considered the matter to be one in which the Institution should interest itself. He thought that as the contour survey of the site was well in hand, it was none too soon to set about selecting a name, and one which would be truly Australian. He felt sure there would not be a sufficient consensus of admiration for any individual to permit of its being named after any public man. He was, therefore, prepared to propose that the name of Millewa be suggested to the Minister for Home Affairs as suitable. Millewa (the last syllable of which is pronounced as war) is a native name for the largest river in Australia, the Murray. The name is recorded several times by Sir Thomas Mitchell in "Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia," and his last entry was made on the Murrumbidgee between Tarcutta and Gundagai, where he writes that "Everywhere the Murray was known as the Millewa." The only bearing upon the meaning of the name which he records, is that