

- (4) The incidence of ragwort, which necessitated the abandonment of dairying:
- (5) A lack of soil fertility sufficient to promote and hold the growth of English grasses:
- (6) Insufficient subdivisional fencing, which would have enabled better pasture control.

The Committee is convinced that the problems enumerated above can and have been overcome, and that the blocks under the control of the Department are ample testimony of this contention. The methods adopted to overcome the problems can be briefly described as follows:—

- (1) The settlers still remaining in the district have been assisted generally under the revaluation provisions of the Land Act, and also under the Mortgagees and Lessees Rehabilitation Act:
- (2) The problem of the mineral-deficient lands was overcome with the discovery that the major cause of “bush sickness” was the absence of cobalt, which is now applied through the medium of cobaltized superphosphate:
- (3) The remedy in this case is to use sufficient stock to cope with the extraordinary growth, particularly of fern, during the late spring and early summer. This course is particularly necessary during the first two years with a pasture sown on fern land. Any losses which might accrue through the necessity of purchasing the stock required must be regarded as a capital development charge:
- (4) Ragwort and its control is essentially a problem associated with dairying and where the incidence is great can be controlled only by the systematic and often costly grazing of sheep. Though at one time viewed with extreme alarm, there is no doubt that ragwort can be controlled with sheep and on small dairy-farms where the farmer is prepared to apply himself by the use of sodium chlorate or kindred weed-killers:
- (5) The natural lack of fertility has been overcome with remarkable success by the hand top-dressing of the hilly country with artificial manures:
- (6) Where development has been undertaken, the Department has immediately followed up the grassing with the necessary subdivisional fencing.

The work undertaken by the Lands and Survey Department in the King-country was a task of major national importance, and it can be said that the work has been worth while if only on account of the beneficial effect it has had on the district as a whole, and on the outlook of the individual farmer in particular. There now appears to be every prospect of the King-country developing into the prosperous farming district it was originally considered capable of becoming. So far as the actual blocks which have been reconditioned and developed are concerned, it must be reiterated that it was never intended that they should be loaded with the labour-costs which have been incurred, and the Committee is of the opinion that such a policy was sound in view of the dual purpose involved—i.e., the relief of unemployment, and the reconditioning and development of reverted areas. The following recommendations are made with regard to future operations:—

- (1) When conditions permit, there should be an extension of the present operations by the Department. The very nature of the work and its extent make it an undertaking which should be carried out on a large scale by the State. Before further work is commenced, however, there should be a comprehensive classification of the lands involved. From the Committee's investigations it was made clear that no area should be tackled unless it contains a reasonable proportion of ploughable land suitable for cropping for winter feed. Again, there are certain areas which are on account of their contour or quality quite unsuitable for development. The classification should therefore be into two main divisions:—
 - (a) Areas suitable for development and settlement; and
 - (b) Areas considered unsuitable and which might either be allowed to regenerate to forest or be handed over to the State Forest Service for future planting operations:
- (2) The ultimate objective of the development should be the subdivision of the completed areas into economic farm units. The question of the tenure on which the units should be held is a policy question, and not one for the Committee to decide. It is most important, however, that the subdivision should not take place until development is complete, the possibility of reversion has passed, and the area in question is not still required in connection with further development operations on adjoining or adjacent country:
- (3) It is patent that the most economic method of development is to deal with the country “on a face,” and with expedition. Such a procedure would, however, bring to light innumerable difficulties in view of the different ways in which the land is held by the owners and occupiers. There is a large proportion of the undeveloped country held by Native owners which is a nursery for noxious weeds and a menace to adjoining lands. The Native lands are not alone in this respect, and there are large undeveloped areas of freehold land and land held under Crown leaseholds which are in a similar state. Despite the difficulties involved, it is considered that the necessity for the development “on a face” is sufficiently important to warrant special powers being provided to enable such a policy to be carried out: