

carried out there different wheats have been evolved that have proved to be suitable for growing in the drier districts. I would strongly support any proposal to establish an experimental farm at Gibson's Soak and I certainly think that the light land areas, with their adequate rainfall, would, if properly developed, prove of great assistance to the State in the long run.

The only other matter I desire to refer to is to suggest the establishment of a home on the Goldfields or at Esperance for turned-down miners. Mention has been made on various occasions of the number of miners on the fields who suffer from the dread industrial diseases, many of the more elderly men having contracted advanced silicosis or tuberculosis. Under existing conditions they end their days at Wooroloo. Many of them might not have reached that stage had they submitted themselves to treatment earlier, but the fact remains that many of them are in that condition. If a home for their accommodation were established at Esperance, their dependants would be able to establish themselves in the vicinity and be in touch with the sufferers. That would not be possible if the men were sent to the sanatorium at Wooroloo.

As a matter of fact, when men are told they must go to Wooroloo, it is like signing their death warrants. There are many pensioners who have worked in the goldfields areas for many years and have been fortunate enough not to contract silicosis or tuberculosis. They have had to give up working and the only place where they can go is the Old Men's Home, but they do not relish that prospect. Many of them have little homes on various leases, but latterly some of those leases have been taken over by companies and the men have been notified that they must vacate their humpies. The Government should evolve some scheme whereby premises containing one or two rooms could be erected at Coolgardie, Boulder, or Kalgoorlie for the accommodation of these men who would then be far happier than if forced to go to the Old Men's Home. I support the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Central) [5.12]: I desire to associate myself with other members in congratulating you, Mr. President, upon your election to the Chair, and I take this opportunity to thank you for

your courtesy and assistance to me as a new member last year. I can assure you that your kindness was appreciated. I also desire to congratulate Sir Charles Latham and Sir Frank Gibson on the honours the King has seen fit to confer on them. Last session when I spoke on the Address-in-reply, I was the youngest member of this House in both age and service. Now, when about 12 months have elapsed, there is one member younger than I am in age and four younger in service. Times are changing, and I am beginning to regard myself as one of the old members.

Hon. G. Fraser: Do not get grey-haired!

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Not quite.

Hon. W. R. Hall: You can look forward to a pension!

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: With regard to wheat matters, this has been the subject of much controversy and there are many points that members are possibly not fully acquainted with. We have been told by a member of another place of the wonderful advantages we would derive under the International Wheat Agreement. If we study the iniquitous agreement that was signed on behalf of the wheatgrowers, without their discussing it or giving it any consideration at all, by Mr. McCarthy, acting for the Commonwealth Minister for Commerce, we must come to the conclusion that they have been trying to sell us a pup. In the first place, the oversea export price for wheat when the agreement was signed was 20s. 6d. a bushel, whereas under the agreement the price to the growers was reduced to 12s. 6d. a bushel. This price was based on Lake ports charges and freight from Australian ports to the Canadian Lake ports is 10d. per bushel. The price was based on that for Manitoba No. 1, and as there is a difference of 4d. a bushel between that and Australian f.a.q. wheat, that leaves our price at from 12s. 6d. to 11s. 4d. per bushel, with the export price at 20s. 6d. That is how much we were to gain from that wonderful agreement.

I do not object to the International Wheat Agreement on principle, but we had it thrown at us. It was even signed on our behalf without its having been referred to us, and that I think is wrong. Argentina refused to enter into the agreement at any stage of the game and sold all her wheat

at 30s. 6d. per bushel. America, which had just lately ratified the agreement but had not actually entered into it, had nothing much to lose. At that time she was selling her wheat at 14s. 6d. a bushel, the reason being that she had to lend her dollars to the various countries before they could buy her wheat. Naturally, America had to discount the price of her wheat in order to enable such countries to buy it. But that was not the case with Australia, which was selling her wheat on the sterling market. She could sell all her wheat without any trouble whatever.

The worst feature of the international agreement was the fact that, although the price was fixed for one year, it was subject to a huge discount, year by year, for five years, without taking into account the cost of producing the wheat or the cost of the various commodities which the farmer had to buy from the countries that were importing our wheat. Had those countries to which we were exporting our wheat agreed to reduce the price of cornsacks and woolpacks and other requirements to a figure comparable with the cost of the production of our wheat, and reduced their prices year by year in the same way as it was proposed to reduce the price of our wheat, a more equitable basis might have been arrived at. Fancy a manufacturer sending his sales manager oversea to sell furniture and saying to him, "You can sell this at our price; never mind what we have to pay for the materials we have to buy in return." How ridiculous! There would be no business done. At the present time, a few farmers in this State have agreed to enter into the Commonwealth pool. I am positively certain that the large majority of those farmers do not realise what they are voting for.

Hon. E. H. Gray: They have business acumen.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: They have not, not by a long way.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Why did you not draw up a case for them?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: When we realise that, on last year's pool alone, the farmers of this State—taking them as a separate entity—subsidised the Eastern States to the extent of £750 per farm, it will be realised what they have been losing. And

that is only on one pool! To give Mr. Pollard the right to sell our wheat when and where he likes is not a business proposition to me. Far from it! A wheatgrower takes at least 18 months to produce his crop. During that time he is laying out his capital. He has to fallow, buy super, keep his seed wheat back, and obtain his supplies of kerosene, benzine and oil. Then he is asked to turn round and say, "Mr. Pollard, here is our wheat. Do what you like with it." Do members call that good business? I do not. In another place it was said that £1 per bushel for wheat was a ridiculous price. In my opinion, that was a ridiculous statement to make. Did the person making it take into account the fact that the cost of everything the farmer uses has increased, the cost of harvesters, tractors, ploughs and so on? It was a ridiculous statement to make!

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Do not forget the bad seasons and the low prices which the farmers had to suffer.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I quite realise all that. It takes at least five good seasons to put a man on his feet after one bad season, but it takes only another bad season to put him in the "blue" again. I am very much afraid that farmers are now relying on the value of their wool as compared with the value of their wheat. Fortunately, the wool market is good and looks like holding its own; but, I repeat, wool, in conjunction with wheat, is keeping the farmer on top. Much criticism has been levelled at the policy of this Government in permitting Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. to take the poll of the wheatgrowers. What could be more democratic? Co-operative Bulk Handling is owned and controlled by the growers themselves. What objection can there be to asking the growers to control their own ballot? None at all. I believe Mr. Gray said that we could not have a State pool. I should like to remind him that previous to the war we did have a voluntary wheat pool in this State, and a very good pool it was.

Why cannot we have a State pool when we were able to run a voluntary pool successfully and satisfactorily? I think many farmers, perhaps—and members also—forget the original purpose of the Act we already have on our statute book. Members will no doubt recall that last year it was at one time thought likely that the Common-

wealth would abandon control of wheat under the Defence (Transitional Powers) Act, and it was therefore essential that an Act be placed on our statute book to prevent the wheatgrower from being forced on to the open market to deal with the wheat merchant. Yet we are being accused of trying to do that very thing! The Act was placed on the statute book for that purpose only, with a view, as I said, to preventing the grower from being thrown back on the open market and forced to accept whatever price he might be able to get. It is very unfair, and many of the farmers do not realise the truth. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to make a farmer appreciate all these points. So much for wheat.

While on the subject of agriculture, I would ask the Honorary Minister to give consideration to extending the branch of his department dealing with soil erosion. I know that soil erosion is a most difficult problem and that the men working on it are doing an excellent job. This is a big State and the problem is a huge one. The men at present engaged on it, however, have no hope of grappling with it successfully. Would it not be possible to bring experts from overseas to help us out? It may cost the State something, but we shall be well repaid. As the Minister said, we unfortunately started 20 years too late; but, having lost the 20 years, it is high time we got on with the job and did not lose any more time.

There is a big area to cope with over which erosion has been caused by both wind and water in the past, and it will take many years to build up that land again. The farmer himself must do his share, but he must have expert advice. Today a farmer must be able to do pretty well anything. He has to be a scientist and a businessman and, in some cases, a super optimist. He has not time to do all the work that is necessary and at the same time cope with the problems which I have mentioned. It is for that reason I suggest that advisers should be sent to the districts affected to work out the problem and advise the farmers. It would then be up to the farmers to do the rest. I hope the Honorary Minister will endeavour to enlarge the branch of his department dealing with this matter. I can assure him that to do so will pay in the long run.

The Honorary Minister: I am not the Treasurer, you know.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Unfortunately, the Honorary Minister is not.

The Honorary Minister: I wish I were.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: If you were, you would not be in this Chamber and we would be deprived of the pleasure of your company.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Another problem which vitally affects this State must be given attention. Mr. Pollard recently said that the farmers did not despise the rabbit as they used to. However, the rabbit problem is one that must be tackled and it is impossible for the farmer to do all the work himself. It must be made a national matter. Another subject to which I think the Government might direct attention, if it has not already done so, is the Tourist Bureau. I do not know whether my information is correct, but I understand something has already been done in this connection. However, I consider it necessary that at each of the centres—Geraldton, Albany, Bunbury, Busselton and Kalgoorlie—the Government should co-ordinate the efforts of the committees working in those towns. There is nothing I know of in this State that we could more advantageously spend a few pounds on, as we may reap a harvest of millions in return. There are millions of pounds throughout the world ready to be spent by tourists and if our various organisations in the towns I have mentioned were given a little assistance, the Government would be doing something on the right lines.

Hon. G. Bennetts: In many parts of the Eastern States the people do not know we exist here.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: That is so. As I said, the efforts of the various organisations should be co-ordinated and they should be controlled from a central office, subsidised by the Government. I am not a believer in government control, and I do not favour government departments unless they pay their way, but this is one organisation that could be made to pay its way handsomely. The organisation at Geraldton has done much to put that town on the map. It is a very good town. The Abrolhos Islands are one of the main attractions of the district at the present time. They are

completely booked out for a considerable period to come. I do not think we have anything to worry about so far as tourist attractions in the State are concerned. We could sell this State to anybody in the world.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Is not accommodation the great trouble?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: That is a difficulty in any country. Australia is not peculiar in that respect. However, it is a difficulty which must be overcome and the sooner the better. Much has been said about our water supplies, but I shall deal with the subject from a different angle. We know that today the policy of the Commonwealth Government is to arrange for 70,000 immigrants to enter Australia per year, until we reach a total of 20,000,000. I should like to know what will happen if no provision is made for water supplies and we have these 20,000,000 immigrants, even if they are not all to be here for 40 years hence. We cannot supply sufficient water for the few people already here. We shall have to place these immigrants in the cities and on the seaside, where perhaps they might be compelled to drink salt water, or something else. If, however, we are intending to place them in the hinterland, where they will be needed, then the sooner we start planning water supplies for them the better.

In Geraldton this year we will not get a drop of rainwater in the dams. All our water will be supplied from bores. In my opinion, although the situation at present is an excellent one, I point out that the ground is so porous that it takes a fall of four to five inches of rainwater before any flow starts to run into the dam. If at least 50 acres of the surface were bituminised, I think that would certainly help the position. However, as I said, to place 20,000,000 people in this country at the rate of 70,000 per annum, is wrong unless something is done to provide adequate water supplies. That is only a businesslike proposition.

The Honorary Minister: You are a super optimist, all right.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: As I said a little while ago, a farmer has to be a super optimist. I desire to touch on a point which was mentioned by Mr. Heenan. I refer to air travel. Under the new redistribution of seats, my district will be cut down;

all of it in the Murchison district will be included in the districts of the three Kalgoorlie members. They have my sympathy. Up to the present time, I must admit I have not even gone as far as Wiluna. But had air travel been available, I would have been there. The time has come when consideration must be given to the matter of air travel for members representing the out-back areas. Last night and today it took me 26 hours to come from Geraldton to Perth. I could have got here in two hours by plane, and been saved a lot of discomfort. That brings me back to the subject of trains. I make a plea to members to give the Minister for Railways some consideration and assistance in trying to solve the problem of rail transport. He has a hard job. We were five hours late into Perth this morning. Up our way there is a line, 34 miles long, and the schedule time is three hours, yet that train runs four hours late.

Hon. G. Bennetts: We arrived four hours late today.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Yes, but that was on a 400 mile trip. I am speaking of a matter of 34 miles. Many people blame the engines. This morning our trouble was due to the engine, but on many occasions it is not the engine, and we have to look further afield to find the fault. Most workers are genuine in their desire to see the railways return to a decent standard and give service to the public, but unfortunately there are one or two who do not care, and they are the ones we have to weed out in order to make the railways efficient. Under the old system when a train crew took out an engine they looked after it and took a pride in it. Every time the train stopped they polished it, and if anything went wrong with the engine they took it to the shed and had it fixed. Under the pooling system today, if anything goes wrong it is, in many instances, not even reported, and so it goes on. If we went back to the old system we would find that the engines would be in a much better condition than they are today.

Hon. E. M. Davies: It is many years since that applied.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Yes, but if we talk to the old drivers we find that they think that the change to the pooling system was one of the biggest mistakes ever made.

There was a certain amount of economy attached to it, but that economy has gone to the wrong side of the ledger. Hostels have been mentioned. I think it is time a hostel was built at Geraldton for the benefit of our high school children. We have an excellent high school, but the children from outside cannot get accommodation to take advantage of it. That is wrong.

Hon. G. Bennetts: You have let nine buildings go from there to Kalgoorlie.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Private enterprise has endeavoured to provide a hostel, but unfortunately neither land nor buildings have been available, and when private enterprise fails, it is time for the Government to take a hand. I hope the Minister will try to induce Cabinet to do something so that the high school can function as it should. I am going to touch a little on the gold-mining industry because a fair slice of gold-mining country is included in the area I represent. I, as well as the members from Kalgoorlie, know the disadvantages that face the industry today.

I was surprised to hear Mr. Heenan say that Mr. Chifley was not quite as heart-breaking to the goldfielders as most people made out. I am afraid that since he spoke, he must have changed his opinion, because if ever there was a statement made that was a disappointment to the goldminers, that was. It contained no suggestion of making any provision to help the goldminers in any way. The hon. member did not even know how many people there were in Kalgoorlie—he was not within 10,000 of the number! That is how much he knows of the position. I would like to consider the goldminer on somewhat the same footing as the wheat farmer. We have been pegged down to the price of 6s. 3d. for wheat for home consumption, irrespective of whether our costs have risen or not. The goldminer has his price fixed irrespective of his costs of production.

Hon. G. Bennetts: You are going to add to the burden by way of increased freights.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: We will all have to suffer those increases. We should have had them in the past. Had we done so we would not have had them today, and the railways would probably have been in a much better position. That is blame that the previous Administration must take. In principle, I do not like rises in freights, but they just

cannot be helped. If America or the powers that-be could be induced to see the fallacy of holding gold where it is—it can be sold for £36 an ounce outside—so that a certain amount was allowed on the open market, probably America would raise her price.

Hon. G. Bennetts: You might flood the country with it.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I do not think so. Unless some miracle happens to reduce the cost of producing gold, the only answer is to raise the price. I hope that it will not be too long before we can reduce the costs of production of everything, and, consequently, the cost of living. Unfortunately, I cannot see that state of affairs at present. There is not much more that I can say, but I thank Mr. Bennetts for the remark he made when speaking to the motion, when he said he had come to the conclusion that the control of secondhand timber should have been abolished last year, when I tried my best to have it cut out. I am glad my efforts were not altogether in vain. Although I was beaten at the time, it gives me some little pride to realise that what I said in the first place was not wrong. I thank the hon. member for his remark.

There is one other small point I would like to make in regard to the railways. I understand that in the past a board was set up to deal with suggestions made by the men working in the railways, who should and do understand the conditions. Unfortunately—and this might hurt some people, but I must say it—too often those suggestions were sent on to the men higher up, and then passed out for the time being. Later they were brought back under a different description and claimed by the men up above. I am not very far wrong when I say that, because I have information to support me.

Hon. G. Bennetts: You are pretty well correct.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Some monetary prize should be given to the man who makes the best suggestion each month, and the result published in the railway monthly magazine. If that were done, every one would know who was the author of the suggestion, and when it got up above, they could not counteract it. In the past, up to £50 has been paid for suggestions that would improve the working of the railways. I suggest that a similar prize be given monthly,

and reference to the winner printed in the railway magazine.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Some of the heads would not confer with the men.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I know. If the men knew that their suggestions would be considered in the right quarter, they would be forthcoming again. I intend to approach the Minister on the subject and I hope something will come of it. I support the motion.

On motion by Hon. C. H. Simpson, debate adjourned.

BILL—PRICES CONTROL.

First Reading.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. G. B. Wood—East) [5.42] in moving the second reading said: It was not my intention, until this afternoon, to introduce the Bill, but owing to the congestion on the notice paper and the many Bills which will be taken after the Address-in-reply debate is concluded, and also with a view to giving members an opportunity to consider the measure, I decided to do so today. There will therefore be no rush in giving it the consideration it deserves.

The Bill provides for the control of prices to pass from the Commonwealth to the State. In order to examine the possibilities of State prices control and the decontrol of prices, it was necessary to review briefly the need for the enactment of the original prices control regulations, which were prescribed by the Commonwealth. Price control legislation was enacted as one of the measures for controlling inflation, which usually follows a war or preparation for a war. Accordingly, I propose to trace briefly the cause of inflation in Australia, and then to examine the steps taken by the Commonwealth Government to alleviate the difficulties which were created by war-caused inflation.

There are two main causes of inflation—shortage of goods and over-supply of money. The two, of course, go hand in hand. During a war, consumer goods are in short

supply because their manufacture is prohibited, or the goods manufactured are diverted by governmental regulations for war purposes, so that few or none is available to the public. Accordingly they become scarce and desirable, and, necessarily, expensive. The Commonwealth Government followed the usual procedure—and rightly so, too—of prohibiting the manufacture of luxury goods. It also diverted essential commodities to war purposes and prohibited the use of vital raw materials for unessential services, and limited their use in essential consumer goods. The over-supply of money was created to increase the Government's spending power and to increase internal industrial activity.

The total expansion of credit which took place during the war years exceeded £100,000,000, and included a substantial increase in the note issue and Treasury bills, followed by an increase in deposits by the public in the trading and other banks and a reduction in the outstanding hire purchase book debts. The upward inflationary pressure was aided by inflation in other countries and a big price rise in the primary products which Australia sells for export. Insofar as exportable primary products are concerned, the home price is determined largely by overseas prices, and the income so obtained is split up into wages, rent, interest, taxation and profit (or reward) for the farmer's personal exertion. The prices for internal consumption are generally fixed by the export prices. That applies to most things, but in Australia it did not apply to wheat. That is the cause of the argument taking place at the present time. I believe that the wheat-growers were asked to carry too great a burden in the subsidising for internal consumption. Particularly is this so with regard to bread.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: That applied to other things, such as eggs, bacon and the like.

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. The price of goods manufactured and sold locally contains the same elements, namely, wages, rent, interest, taxation and profit. The taxation effect is difficult to ascertain with any degree of accuracy because it is interwoven by indirect taxation into costs in every direc-