

put up in these days. The chief complaint seems to be that boards and controls have multiplied so greatly during the last decade. In my opinion, some of the existing boards are entirely unnecessary, though some serve a useful purpose. Those that are mere excrescences could well be abolished without any great disadvantage to the community. It has been said, and I agree, that had there been boards in Noah's time the Ark would never have been built.

The subject of housing has been plastered a good deal and will continue to be so. The Government is not to blame for the present deplorable position, but it will incur blame if steps are not taken to remedy existing troubles. The housing problem is approaching the stage of bordering on a national emergency and civil servants do not seem to be able to cope with the situation. A suggestion has been made that a committee from inside Parliament would do better. This suggestion contains some merit and I think could be implemented with results advantageous to the many home-seekers who are now viewing the future with a good deal of concern.

We have had frequent pessimistic expressions about the future by leading public men. A prominent South African said that it seemed as if people were grumbling because there was not enough gloom to go round. From the Prime Minister down, we have had pessimistic utterances which, I consider, are unwarranted. Provided, as the Leader of the Opposition stated the other night, in a thoughtful speech, the will of the people to work is not undermined, posterity has nothing to fear. This is my first speech in the House, and to say that I feel nervous would be an understatement. Western Australia is a young State and a plastic State, and I urge the Government to mould it along sound lines. Members on the Opposition side of the House do not seem to be a bad lot of fellows, and I believe the future of the State will be safe in the hands of the present Government.

I thank members for the attentive hearing they have given me. I do not know whether I shall speak very often, but when I do, I hope it will be on a subject of which I have some knowledge. I thank members for their forbearance and appreciate what they have done for me, both inside and outside the Chamber, since I became a member. Much has been said about election technique. All

I can say that this is inevitable at election time. On such an occasion, one's tongue is apt to outrun one's better judgment, and possibly things are said that are not meant. As often happens, the good goes to the bottom and the rottenness rises to the top. In my electorate I endeavoured to make the fight a clean one, and I must acknowledge that my opponent did the same thing.

On motion by Mr. Styants, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.6 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Thursday 21st August, 1947.

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The DEPUTY PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.

STIRLING HIGHWAY BUS ROUTE.

As to Easing Picking-up Regulation.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT (on notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

Will the Government give consideration to allowing privately owned buses, now licensed to operate along Stirling Highway, to pick up and set down passengers at selected points on the trolley bus route?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes, the matter is under consideration.

ROAD BOARDS.

As to Proposed Roadmaking-Machinery Pool.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE (for Hon. A. L. Loton) (on notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

Following on the statement in this morning's issue of "The West Australian" by the Minister for Works regarding the pro-

posed roadmaking-machinery pool, will he have forwarded to all road boards a copy of such proposal?

The MINISTER replied:

At the suggestion of the Minister for Local Government, the Road Board Association Conference appointed a committee to consider the idea of plant pools for the use by local authorities. No written proposal was made.

This committee has had a preliminary discussion with the Commissioner of Main Roads and it is presumed that the association executive will keep road boards fully advised when the report of their committee has been received.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. F. E. Gibson (for Hon. E. M. Heenan), leave of absence for twelve consecutive sittings granted to Hon. H. Seddon (North-East) on the ground of ill-health.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Seventh Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. J. A. DIMMITT (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.35]: Like other members who have preceded me, I sincerely regret the passing of the late Mr. Drew. I did not have the pleasure of knowing him in the heyday of his political career, but I shall always be grateful to him for the kindness, consideration and advice which he extended to me when I first entered Parliament. I shall always appreciate his memory on that account. I compliment you, Mr. Deputy President, on your election to your office and I desire to repeat on the floor of the House the statement I made to you on your election, that you can depend upon me, as Chairman of Committees, for complete loyalty and co-operation. To Mr. Parker and Mr. Wood I offer my good wishes. To the new members I say that I hope they will continue to enjoy the confidence of their electors and remain for a long time to do credit to them in this Chamber. I hope, too, that the President will soon be restored to good health.

I was interested in Mr. Heenan's concern about the meagre reference made in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech to the mining in-

dustry. He suggested it might indicate a lack of interest on the part of the Government in that most important part of the State's activities. I suggest to Mr. Heenan, however, that rather than take that small reference in the Speech as an indication of the interest which the Government is likely to take in mining, he should consider the activity of the new Minister for Mines and use that as his criterion of the Government's interest in auriferous and metalliferous mining in this State. The present Minister has been more frequently in Collie and on the Eastern Goldfields and the Murchison Goldfields than have many of his predecessors in a much longer period. He has even been so far afield as Hamersley Range.

Hon. G. Fraser: He had to become acquainted with local interests.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: That is a very good thing. It is all to his credit.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I hope we shall get results from it.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: In 4½ months the present Minister has done more than some of his predecessors did in a much longer period. I think we shall reap substantial results from his keen interest in the industry.

Hon. G. Fraser: His predecessors knew all about the industry. He had to find out all about it.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: It is interesting to learn that his predecessors did know all about the industry, but I suggest that more could have been done by them for the industry. His Excellency points out in his Speech that the Government intends to appoint a standing committee to investigate all public works likely to cost more than £75,000. This decision must have given a keen sense of satisfaction to Mr. Thomson. Year in, year out, session after session, he has pressed for such a committee. I suggest to the Government that it avail itself of his valuable services by including him as a member of the committee. I was also glad to note from the Speech and from subsequent remarks—and even previous remarks—made by the Premier that the Government is prepared to co-operate to the fullest extent with the Commonwealth Government, but will not be dominated by it and will resist at all times any effort on its part to make inroads on the constitutional rights of the State.

From newspaper reports of recent activities at Canberra, it is pleasing to note that not only our own Premier but the Premiers of other States, including Labour Premiers, have very much the same feeling about the Commonwealth's nibbling away at the constitutional rights of the States. The determined effort made by our Premier, and other Premiers, to convert the Commonwealth outlook on the collection of income tax is something which I think will please every member of this Chamber. It will be recalled that the Commonwealth Government was given the sole right to levy income tax as an emergency measure on the distinct understanding that the right would be returned to the States when the emergency ceased to exist. We saw, from the report of the Premiers' Conference yesterday, and from what happened at previous Premiers' Conferences, the attitude that the Prime Minister adopted, and still maintains, of resisting every effort by the States to regain that which is their undoubted right.

Every year this Government has to go, cap in hand, to the Commonwealth Grants Commission to seek funds. With the indulgence of members, I shall examine for a few moments the latest statistical return available on taxation, being the 26th report of the Commissioner of Taxation. It is dated the 1st May, 1946, although this copy did not reach Western Australia until the 21st March of this year. The report covers the assessment year 1943-44, and, so far as I can ascertain, contains the latest information available on the subject. It indicates that Western Australian residents paid in income tax alone the very substantial sum of £7,299,000. Many taxpayers, I am afraid, are lulled into the belief that the bulk of the income tax was paid by the wealthy class. A perusal of this report indicates that the wealthy class is but a small group in this State.

In the assessment year under review, there were only 13 taxpayers in Western Australia who had an assessable income of over £10,000; and, although the Federal Treasurer collected from them an aggregate of 80 per cent. of their earnings, a very small resultant tax was made available to the Commissioner. These thirteen people who were taxed 80 per cent. of their earnings contributed only £129,389 out of a total collection of £7,299,000. During that same assessment year there were 64 West-

ern Australian taxpayers whose income exceeded £5,000 a year. This group paid a total of £293,998. In the group of taxpayers receiving between £4,000 and £5,000 there were 72 Western Australians who contributed £194,239. The next group, those earning between £3,000 and £4,000, included 169 people who paid £317,297 into the Commonwealth Treasury. The group that earned £1,000 and over comprised 5,441 people in Western Australia, and they paid £2,675,000.

Let us look at the lower income groups. Those whose income was £400 a year paid £1,977,000 in income tax, whilst the middle class income earners, the people receiving between £400 and £1,000 of assessable income, provided £2,246,000. A review of these figures clearly indicates that of the £7,299,000 collected from Western Australian taxpayers in the year under review, almost two-thirds was paid by the working class or the middle class. That is an important aspect of the incidence of income taxation and is one that is either not known or is largely overlooked. In addition to the £7,299,000 collected by way of income tax from Western Australian taxpayers, substantial amounts were contributed by way of sales tax, excise and customs duty. These amounts total in all several millions.

The report also reveals that sales tax paid in Western Australia for that year was £1,328,241. But sales tax, excise and customs duty are all carefully hidden in the price structure, and the public becomes completely unaware of the amount of taxation it pays through these indirect sources. The point I wish to make at this stage is that Western Australia should not be considered as a mendicant State. We have contributed substantially to the Commonwealth revenue and by way of income tax reimbursement in this assessment year, the Commonwealth paid to the State Treasury the sum of £2,546,000, by way of grant £850,000, and £473,000 by way of sinking fund. So, the total contribution made by the Federal Treasury to the State Treasury was £3,869,000, whereas this State contributed by way of income tax £7,299,000 and, in addition, several millions in excise, customs duty and sales tax. I feel, therefore, that the outlook of the Federal Treasury on our State Treasury should be tempered with mercy, and we should not have to go

cap in hand year after year as we do. In fact I hope the time will come when this and the other States will regain the power that was taken from them to levy income tax.

The shortage of buildings is something that is causing us all a great deal of concern. I hope the Government will give favourable consideration to the building of two rooms, kitchen, bathroom, and conveniences, as part of what will, when completed, be a four or five-roomed house. Such a plan would almost double the availability of housing with the same use of material. Naturally it would greatly relieve the difficulties of those who are today sadly in need of homes. I think the local governing authorities need have no fear about the half-house plan. After all, the frontage facing the street would be completed with a verandah, if any, and the additions would be made behind the finished structure.

Hon. G. Fraser: The Government is getting away from the promises it made during the elections.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I am not speaking for the Government. I hope the Government will give consideration to the half-house plan.

The Honorary Minister: It is nothing new. It is already being done in Melbourne.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: What is?

The Honorary Minister: The constructing of half-houses.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Yes. I hope the Government will follow that example. I would rather see hundreds of half-houses so that couples who are now denied the privacy and privilege of a home—some are living with "in-laws" and some are housed on verandahs and in single rooms—would have a half-house, as a nest of their own, than continue under the present conditions.

The Honorary Minister: The previous Government did not think about it.

Hon. G. Fraser: The previous Government had a higher standard. I can show you where such buildings were erected 20 years ago and they are still in that stage!

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! Mr. Dimmitt will proceed.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Thank you, Sir. I am glad to be allowed to speak again. The half-house plan has many disadvan-

tages, and I think it is desirable that people should be allowed to buy the space they require instead of being compelled to purchase accommodation for which they have no immediate need.

Hon. G. Fraser: Get those people to build them in Nedlands.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: This plan would be a great help to the person on an ordinary income, because whether such a man is buying a house on terms or taking advantage of the rental scheme, the weekly payment would be much nearer twenty shillings than thirty shillings as it is at present. I would like to see the greatest number of houses built in the shortest possible time, and I believe that the half-house plan would be a tremendous help in that direction. I also suggest that it is high time that most of the controls should be eased or tapered off, and some entirely discontinued.

Controls encourage lawbreakers. They make possible black markets and create opportunities for dishonesty and depravity. All these things come about at the expense of the average honest citizen. Controls that cannot be properly policed make bad laws, and bad laws make bad men. Law-breaking undetected, like a scourge or disease, runs through the whole place. I dread to think what the morals of this nation will be if these controls are allowed to continue for an indefinite period. Apart altogether from the moral aspect, they are stifling initiative and lessening opportunities for industrial expansion.

I am advised that a number of builders and contractors are not operating today as such. I understand that some of them have said that they will not go back to their trade while the controls last. Many of them have indicated that if the restrictions were lifted they would return to it. That would be very welcome in these times. I hope that the present Government, when it brings down, as it must, a continuance Bill to carry on the Building Operations and Building Materials Control Act, will give serious consideration to easing the restrictions that appear in the various subsections of Section 9.

If that is done, it will give an opportunity for these jobbers, who today are not engaged in new construction work, to undertake more repair and renovation work and so make good the ravages of time from

which most properties are suffering as a result of the war years. I earnestly request that consideration be given to increasing the amounts that can be spent under these various headings. In conclusion, I congratulate the Government on the activities it has indulged in so far, and I feel that it is making not only a good impression on the public mind, but is getting through a lot of work. If it continues as it is going, its life will be long and greatly to the advantage of this State.

HON. E. M. DAVIES (West) [4.58]: On the occasion of my first rising to address this Chamber, I would like to take the opportunity of expressing my gratitude to the people of Great Britain for the magnificent stand they made in the dark days of 1940, and their sacrifices up to the conclusion of the European War. I wish also to express my gratitude to all members of the Fighting Forces for the magnificent part they played in bringing victory to the United Nations. To the relatives of those who made the supreme sacrifice, may I offer my deep condolence?

I desire to congratulate you, Mr. Deputy President, on occupying your honourable position, and to express my regret at the illness of our President. I trust that his convalescence will not be long, and that he will soon be restored to perfect health and be back among us again. My thanks are also due for the welcome that has been extended to me and my colleagues who have entered this Chamber for the first time. I appreciate to the full what members have said and the advice that has been tendered to me on some of the occasions when I have had conversations with older members. Whilst I had not met some of the new members, I cannot allow this occasion to pass without referring to the fact that Hon. C. G. Latham has been known to me for a number of years. I had the honour of serving with him in the 16th Battalion with the first A.I.F. It was there that I came to know him. I have always appreciated his friendship and was pleased to serve with him in that battalion. Moreover, it was gratifying to me to be sworn in as a member on the same day that he was.

Having satisfied my conscience for the time being, I now desire to give credit to the present Commonwealth Government and

the Willcock and Wise Governments for having administered the affairs of this country during the period when Australia was facing one of the greatest crises in its history. For a country containing seven million people to mobilise for total war, carry the war through to victory, to have an orderly demobilisation and bring about the reinstatement of many thousands of Servicemen in industry in the way that was done, is a tribute which cannot be overlooked. We must be very grateful, irrespective of our political opinions, that we were able to survive and emerge from the conflict as a free people.

Like many others, I do not agree that controls should exist for any long period. It was, however, by the regimentation of the nation to a certain extent that we were able to achieve victory. Until such time as conditions become more normal, it is necessary that some of the controls should be retained. I believe that as things become normal, as materials and labour are available, certain controls may be eliminated. I want to make it clear that I believe there is great necessity for price-fixing to remain in force for almost an indefinite period. I remember returning to Western Australia at the conclusion of World War 1 after serving in the Forces, at a time when price-fixing had disappeared almost immediately peace was signed in June, 1919.

To many of us who had returned to the State, the position was very difficult. We could not obtain sufficient clothing without paying an exorbitant price for it and thereby utilising most of the deferred pay that was coming to us. I well remember a friend of mine endeavouring to have two suits made in Perth before going to the country. When he got the suits he had to pay thirty guineas for them. They were the least expensive he could obtain on that occasion.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: That is about today's price.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: We cannot compare today with 1919. The basic wage in 1919 was approximately 9s. 6d. a day, whereas now it is over £5 a week. I do not think there is any comparison between 1919 and the end of hostilities on the last occasion. If any controls are to remain, price-fixing must be kept in operation for some considerable time.

During the last general election it was quite unfair for certain parties to take advantage of the post-war difficulties brought about during the transitional period from war to peace, which is always the most difficult. It is hard to obtain certain materials, particularly for housing, and extremely difficult to obtain labour. One of the many difficulties confronting us is housing. Whilst I do not want to criticise the present Government, I point out that in the past Labour Governments have brought down amending legislation to this House for the purpose of giving the Workers' Homes Board borrowing powers to enable it to erect homes on a rental basis. If I remember correctly, this House on that occasion said that the building of homes on a rental basis was a matter for private enterprise. Apparently private enterprise has thought otherwise.

In the particular district where I am domiciled and which I represent here, houses have not been built by private enterprise for rental purposes to any extent for a long time. Those concerned have preferred to invest their capital in districts which would give them a greater return than would residences built in the Fremantle area. As a result of this, we find that in my province very few homes have been built by private enterprise for rental purposes. If the legislation brought to this House in past years by Labour Governments had been agreed to many homes would have been erected in Fremantle on that particular basis. Although we would not have been able to meet the demand for housing which exists today, at least the position would not have been so severe as it is now.

I notice that the Premier, in answering certain questions in the other place, stated recently that there were houses built for young couples or married couples with one child. I think he said the number of houses so built was nine. That is not a great number to erect since the 1st April. The coupling of the two together does not tell one whether the houses were built for young couples—this would come into the two-unit family category—or whether they were built for young couples with one child, which would bring them into the three-unit plan. We cannot dissect the figures. If such houses are being built for these people—when young people get married they naturally look for a home and

they should have one in which to live—I fail to see why the claims of people in the Fremantle district comprising five and six-unit families, cannot also be entertained in similar fashion. There is something wrong and the Government should, as quickly as possible, endeavour to overcome this situation. Mr. Dimmitt referred to the building of half-houses. That is a question to which deep thought should be given. It may be all right in some cases where finance is not the reason why a house is only half built.

If we take the average family on the lower rung of income and permit a half-house to be built for a married couple, in the course of a few years the family has begun to grow and there is no means of extending the home. Meanwhile families are being brought up under very unhygienic circumstances. The smallness of the home does not provide for sufficient bedrooms and children have to sleep in rooms that do not give the number of cubic feet of air space that are required under the Health Act. Families have to be reared in these circumstances when there is not sufficient finance to provide extra accommodation. Eventually young people leave home and obtain dwellings of their own, and the old couple are left with the building with which they started and which they do not think is worth enlarging. We have many of these homes in the Fremantle district that were built 30 or 40 years ago and have not yet been completed. It would be wise for the Government to give serious consideration to this matter.

Another question I would raise is in regard to hospitals. I understand that the Wise Government made provision for an expenditure of £2,000,000 to bring the hospitals of the State up to the requisite standard. That expenditure was to be spread over a period. I am not looking at this question in a parochial way. I realise that country districts also desire to have hospitals. I hope the Government will give attention to that aspect. In Fremantle the question is rather serious. We have a hospital that is known as a 196-bed institution. The average bed accommodation is for about 170. We also have nurses whose accommodation is unsatisfactory because their home is not large enough for them.

As the Fremantle Hospital serves an extensive area stretching from Claremont to Rockingham, it has to deal with a large number of people who

desire treatment. In addition, it is very often called upon to treat country cases, and difficulties arise in that connection. I heard it said in this House a few days ago that the hospital at Geraldton is a very old one. Having seen it myself I appreciate that fact. Part of the Fremantle Hospital that is being used as a ward at present was, in the early days of the State, the Governor's residence. Members will thus realise the age of that building. I urge the Government to do everything in its power to bring these hospitals up to the required standard. I realise the absolute necessity of providing decent homes for the people but second only to that in importance is the provision of hospital accommodation where required.

I wish to draw the attention of members to the maternity side of hospitalisation. At Fremantle we have some private hospitals that deal with maternity cases. The first I shall refer to is the Bundi Kudja Hospital which has 14 beds with an average of 22 patients monthly. The matron there has to refuse about 12 applications for accommodation weekly. Hillcrest Hospital has a license for 14 beds and St. Helen's Hospital at East Fremantle is licensed for 10 beds but frequently has to provide for 14 patients. Sister Bathgate's Hospital at East Fremantle has 10 beds and sometimes has to provide for 14 mothers. The position from the standpoint of maternity requirements demands urgent attention at Fremantle and I ask the Government to make provision for a maternity ward when additions are being carried out at the Fremantle Hospital.

While dealing with the question of hospitals, I would remind the House that during the recent general elections there was prominently before the public what was known as "the cobweb campaign." Perhaps members may have noticed the publication of a picture of the Grosvenor Hospital showing cobwebs all over it, indicating to the electors that the Wise Government was responsible for the closing of that institution. As chairman of the health committee of the Fremantle City Council, I took a very keen interest in the matter when I heard that the hospital was to be closed. I contacted the mayor, Hon. F. E. Gibson, and I visited the hospital where I was introduced to a very young nurse who informed me that she was in charge.

I found that the reason the hospital was to be closed was that they were unable to obtain the services of a doubly certificated sister and the young nurse herself was not prepared to take the responsibility of conducting the hospital mainly because she was not qualified and because she was to undergo training in maternity nursing. After hearing the explanation I discussed the matter with the mayor and town clerk and we endeavoured to secure the services of a doubly-certificated sister, making inquiries at the Perth Hospital, the Repatriation Department and the Public Health Department. We were not able to obtain one and therefore the hospital had to be closed on the 1st January last.

The Wise Government was in no sense responsible for what happened. Subsequent to that date and while I was acting as mayor of Fremantle, a deputation waited upon me with the request that a conference of representatives of local governing bodies should be convened to discuss the whole question. The conference was accordingly arranged and in due course a deputation waited upon the Minister for Health, Mr. Parker. I shall read to members a portion of the reply received from the Minister so that they will readily understand what actually happened. In the course of the letter the Minister said—

Notices of existing defects have been served by inspectors upon hospitals and where immediate remedy is practicable it has been demanded.

Wherever, through shortage of material or labour, inordinate expense or other difficulty, correction of a defect appeared likely to jeopardise the operation of the hospital, action has been limited to long term notices without penalty clauses.

It has been the policy of the department to keep the private hospitals open even though the private hospital regulations are not fully complied with.

"Grosvenor Hospital" was not closed by the department. This hospital has, for some years, been the subject of adverse reports by the department's inspectors and, during 1946, notices were served upon the owner warning him that unless certain urgent corrective work was undertaken, a license would be refused him for 1947.

The letter goes on to say that no action was taken to comply with the department's requirements but that the Public Health Department did not close the hospital. In the circumstances, I think it is quite unfair that any political party should be entitled

to utilise the Press in an endeavour to place upon the shoulders of the previous Labour Ministers the responsibility for closing the Grosvenor Hospital. If my memory serves me aright it was Abraham Lincoln who said on one occasion, "You can fool some of the people all the time; you can fool all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time."

Another question I shall deal with concerns free immunisation against whooping cough. I am proud to have been associated with the Fremantle District Diphtheria Immunisation Committee since its inception. That committee has performed valuable services in the interests of the people of the district. In the first place a meeting was called and a committee comprising representatives of the local authorities at Fremantle and the contiguous districts—that would be the North Fremantle and East Fremantle Municipal Councils and the Melville and Fremantle Road Boards—was appointed. Those local authorities financed the operations of the committee and at the outset it was necessary to purchase supplies of serum. Eventually the Government made supplies available free and for the past 11 years the clinic has carried on continuously at Fremantle.

Last night I had handed to me the report of the 11th annual meeting of the committee. This shows that since its commencement in 1936 remarkable progress has been made. At that time the incidence of diphtheria per thousand of the child population at Fremantle was 23, but in 1947 the incidence per thousand was only 1.89. That means to say that in the Fremantle districts last year there were only 16 cases of diphtheria. We can claim that the immunisation committee has done excellent work. At the outset it was necessary to break down doubts entertained by certain organisations and private individuals who were opposed to immunisation. But apparently they have been silenced to a great extent.

I ask the Government to institute a free immunisation scheme to combat whooping cough. I have been informed that a pilot scheme was introduced at North Fremantle two years ago when a supply of vaccine sufficient to inoculate 100 children was provided and, further, that 18 months ago an equal quantity was sent to Collie for a similar purpose. I would like the Minister to appreciate the fact that unless whooping cough is

made a notifiable disease, it will not be possible for the local authorities to follow up any outbreak and ascertain what the actual position may be. If that step were taken, then the local authorities could cope with any outbreak, as it has with diphtheria.

Hon. G. Bennetts: The trouble is worse in Kalgoorlie this year than ever before.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: Then I suggest that the hon. member induce the people to immunise their children, and the trouble will be overcome.

Hon. G. Bennetts: We have done that, too.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: Dealing now with the question of education, I believe that, irrespective of what the political views of a Government may be, education must stand in the forefront of its objectives. I congratulate the Wise Government on the record amount made available in 1946-47 for educational purposes. I understand that the amount provided was £1,140,000. That serves to show that, although we had passed through six years of war, the Labour Government endeavoured to keep pace with the demands for improved educational facilities to the extent of our ability to do so, consistent with the need to deal with other requirements.

I am pleased to note that visual training has been introduced in the schools. I regard that as an essential step. Those of use who served in the Armed Forces realise what a great advantage it is to anyone to have an opportunity to secure visual training. During his speech the other day, Sir Hal Colebatch said that during the 25 years Labour Governments had been in office, not one high school had been built.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: No, I said that not one had been established. I know one was built.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: In 1939 the High School was built in Geraldton.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: Yes, I know that.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: Then that school was established there.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: No, it was established 25 years ago. The building was put up later.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: Then we can discuss that matter from another angle. Quite

a number of high schools have been established recently in places that have been in existence for a great number of years. I mentioned that a high school had been built in Geraldton in 1939 and, furthermore, additions have been made to the high schools at Northam, Bunbury and on the Eastern Goldfields. Then again the East Perth Girls' School, which has now been made a high school, was built not so many years ago. The Forrest-street School at Mt. Lawley was opened by the Minister a little while ago. That was also built by the Labour Government.

With regard to the position in country districts, no State can be prosperous unless water supplies are available as well as adequate reticulation. I am sorry that the legislation introduced last session by the Labour Government did not find its way to the statute book. I hope the present Administration will give earnest consideration to a scheme for establishing adequate water supplies throughout the rural districts. Without those essential supplies, the necessary products cannot be grown. I am sure that the farmers generally would be very pleased if informed that a proper scheme was to be inaugurated, one that would be permanent.

I would also ask the Government if it intends to lay down a network of electricity supplies throughout the country districts. Members will remember that a Commission was appointed to advise the Government upon the matter and it recommended a change-over to the 50-cycle frequency. I understand that an expenditure of upwards of £660,000 is to be shared by the Commonwealth and State Governments. There is one point that I would like the Minister to bring under the notice of his colleagues. In England a scheme has been worked out whereby, should a breakdown take place in one area the consumers there can be connected up with a station elsewhere, and so no disability is experienced by the community. I trust the Government will utilise some of the money made available by the Commonwealth to put some such scheme into operation here.

With regard to industrial development in Western Australia, I congratulate the ex-Minister for Works, Mr. Hawke, upon the encouragement he extended to that objective when he was in office. He endeavoured

as far as possible to induce people to establish manufacturing undertakings in this State. In my opinion, he was fairly successful but at the same time we have to take into consideration the fact that the space available near the metropolis for the establishment of heavy industries is very limited. We have some areas in the Bayswater, Maylands and Subiaco districts and also at North Fremantle and in part of the Fremantle district. We have every opportunity, as far as land east of Fremantle is concerned, and I feel that by inviting industry to come here we will have a far more balanced economy, will be able to find employment for people and will also have a chance to supply our own markets and possibly to export goods. Every attempt should be made to invite industries in other States to establish themselves here. The Fremantle City Council has endeavoured to do its utmost and has been fairly successful in making land available. It has had quite a number of applications from bodies desiring to extend their business to this State. I trust that the present Government will follow the example of its predecessors and do everything possible to encourage industry to come here for the benefit of the State and the people generally.

When the present Government was in opposition, there was quite a lot of criticism of the Railway Department. Railways are the arteries of commerce and they are the main means of development. Many lines have been laid down in Western Australia in order to develop the country and as a rule they have not been payable propositions. They have not paid for the grease required to run trains. I feel the Government might consider that when new lines are regarded as necessary for opening up the country, they should not be made a charge on railway revenue but rather on Consolidated Revenue until such times as they are payable.

We have heard a lot recently about road transport. If we are going to allow road transport free competition with the railways, there is only one way in which that can be done, and that is to increase very considerably the fares and freights on the railways. With the exception of two classes of freight, known as "C" and "M", there has been no increase in freights since 1935. I feel that some of the criticism levelled at

the railways has not been quite fair. It must be realised that some locomotives are over 40 years old and it was not possible to have them renewed during the war. The permanent way had to be neglected because there was not sufficient labour to maintain it. In the circumstances, I think the railways did an excellent job over that period.

As a matter of fact, from 1939 to 1945 the railways carried 22,500,000 tons of goods and livestock, 102,000,000 passengers and millions of gallons of water required for drought affected areas. I am of the opinion that the railways should be modernised and that as the previous Government intended to spend £4,000,000 over a period of years for that purpose, that policy should be continued by the present Government and, if possible, the amount of money expended should be increased considerably. The equipment certainly needs to be modernised. As I said before, some of the locomotives are very old and need to be scrapped and replaced by new ones. The previous Government purchased as many as it could obtain.

With modernised rollingstock, particularly for passengers, more people may be induced to travel by rail. Some of the disabilities under which railway men have had to work should be brought to the notice of the House. Coal is one of the main bugbears of locomotive men. I want to make it clear that those men are patriotic enough to desire to use local coal; but when it comes to that which is drawn from the open cut at Collie, they feel they are being asked to do a little too much, though they are struggling with it. Often that coal is mostly dirt and stone and it does not have sufficient heating qualities to raise enough steam to make the trains run on time.

Hon. G. Bennetts: We lost an hour coming from Northam here on Tuesday through that coal.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: I do not know whether the hon. member lost an hour on that occasion, but some of the men have lost quite a lot of patience at times through having to use open-cut coal. Those men are sometimes called upon to go away from home and have to live in barracks. Some of them spend half a life-time in those quarters. I would ask the Government to provide accommodation more in keeping with home

life. If the Minister would have a look at the barracks at Northam, he would have some idea of what is actually required.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Let him have a look at the Commonwealth railway barracks.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: Proper facilities should be provided at the running sheds. The locomotives and rollingstock are so old that they necessitate a good many running repairs. The mechanics who have to work at the running sheds should be provided with better facilities. They have to labour in a pit with an engine over the top. This makes the pit into a tunnel, and the men are working in a draught. Many of them are suffering from disabilities as a result. I believe that the locomotive depot at Fremantle is to be rebuilt. It is time something was done and I hope that when the rebuilding takes place facilities will be provided for the men to have a reasonably warm bath before ceasing duty. At present the methods there are very primitive.

I support the proposal for the establishment of a uniform gauge from Kalgoorlie to Fremantle. I believe it would be an inducement to people arriving in this State to travel east by train and therefore to see Western Australia first, thus having an opportunity to decide whether to settle here instead of elsewhere. The broadening of the gauge should be undertaken, and I regret that the finding of the Select Committee on the subject was not in accordance with what is desired. If that line is broadened it should come south of the river into Fremantle and not go around to the west of the city, joining the existing railway at Claremont and terminating at North Fremantle.

Hon. G. Fraser: You favour the minority report.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: Yes. By coming south of the river the line would open up a lot of country east of Fremantle that is of low agricultural value but which could be used for industry. If that line came through there, sidings could be provided and I feel sure industries would be established in the area. I support the project for the rural training of ex-Servicemen. Those who have served in the Forces and desire to take up farming should have every opportunity and be given every encouragement to do so. I believe in practical training in farm management, which is as im-

portant as the management of any business or industrial concern.

I support the soldier settlement scheme, and I believe that farms should be provided that will ensure a living to the farmers and that the settlers should not be charged interest or rent for the first year. They should be given first-class land. I object to returned men being placed in the marginal areas; and I believe that if an amendment were made to the Closer Settlement Act as a result of which large tracts of country now held to no good purpose were made available for this scheme, many more men could be settled on the land more quickly than at present. There are thousands of acres of first-class land locked up and I feel it should be utilised for the settling of returned men.

In the Press the Minister, with a reasonable amount of pride, said that 100 farms had been established by June. We were all very pleased with that, since a great deal of criticism had been levelled at the previous Government because it was considered that the rate at which Servicemen were being placed on farms was too slow. I believe it is absolutely essential that every avenue should be explored in order to ensure that the farms on which men are placed will return them a living and are in proper condition, and that the men will be able to occupy them without any great inconvenience to themselves. Some credit must be given to the previous Government for the fact that 100 farms were occupied by June, notwithstanding the criticism levelled at that Administration. From the 1st April to the time the statement was made in the Press, there was not sufficient opportunity for the present Government to have finalised the arrangements for settling those men. In mentioning the 1st April, I do not wish to suggest by innuendo that the date has any significance so far as the present Government is concerned.

There is one question that is exercising the minds of quite a number of people in Fremantle, and that is the operations of the Milk Act. I am of the opinion that the amendment passed last session was never intended to be the means of forcing certain people out of the industry. I agree it is necessary to protect the public and to supply them with pure milk; but there are quite a number of people who had established themselves in the dairying industry in Fremantle. Through some oversight, they did

not take out a treatment license, though they contributed to the compensation fund. But they are now being denied the right to carry on their business. I am sure that was never intended when the Act was amended. The tendency has been for monopolies to be created, because some large firms are buying out the smaller ones. The larger firms have treatment licenses, whereas, partly perhaps through the neglect of the Milk Board officials and partly through the neglect of the people concerned, the small men did not obtain such licenses. They are being absorbed by larger firms, and I do not think it is fair to them, when in some cases they have placed their life's savings in the business, to be denied the right to carry on.

If we are to increase the population of this State, we must raise the status of domestic workers. I am not concerned with the amount of endowment paid to mothers—whether it be 5s., 7s. 6d. or 10s. per week—but under present conditions to urge a mother to have a large family is to ask her to take on added responsibility and make herself nothing but a drudge. The time has arrived when the function of a mother on this earth should be to look after her children, while still having a little time to herself for enjoyment. By raising the status of domestic workers, we will be able to find girls who are prepared to go into service in homes and assist mothers in the rearing of their families. If domestic workers are denied the status to which they are entitled, girls will enter other avocations. By some people the status of the domestic is regarded as being the lowest possible, and consequently many girls prefer to go into shops, factories, offices and other avenues of employment. If, through raising the status of the domestic, they are induced to undertake household work, it will better fit them to be the homemakers of the future.

Whatever migration scheme we are to have—I was pleased to hear the remarks of Mr. Simpson on that subject—I shall be glad if the Government, when considering the question, will take into account the fact that it must have a set plan and carry it out in a proper manner. At the conclusion of World War I there was a migration policy that brought a large number of people to this State. I felt that they were not given a fair deal. When I arrived in England, as a stranger, I received the utmost courtesy and help from the people there, but when mi-

grants came here from England I do not think they received the treatment they should have been accorded. Any migration plan, to be successful, must be properly thought out and regulated. Migrants should be brought out as they can be absorbed into industry and homes. Migration should be restricted until such time as the housing position has improved.

I am disappointed at the action of the Government in terminating the services of Mr. Schroeder as Special Magistrate of the Children's Court. I think he has done a very fine job, and has made a valuable contribution to the progress and welfare of this State. I do not wish to indulge in severe criticism, but would point out to the Government that I would strongly object, in any future appointment, to a legally qualified person being given the position, as I think it is one for a trained psychologist. I would not be satisfied with any other appointment. I do not think the Children's Court should be given the atmosphere of a court of law. It should be conducted in the way that Mr. Schroeder controlled it and, when an appointment is made, the appointee should be someone fully trained in psychology. I support the motion.

HON. H. L. ROCHE (South-East) [5.47]: I wish first to express my deep regret at the passing of Hon. J. M. Drew. Like other members who have spoken, I had nothing but courtesy and consideration from him during the time I have been a member of this House. To you, Mr. Deputy President, I tender my congratulations on having had shown to you the confidence of your fellow-members in your elevation to the position that you hold. I wish also to extend my congratulations to the Minister for Mines and the Honorary Minister, and express to them the hope that they will enjoy a long and successful career in their respective positions. I do not mind how long they occupy those positions, as it will be a pleasant change.

During the course of his speech, Mr. Davies referred to one or two matters that I think call for some comment. He expressed regret at the loss, last session, of the legislation introduced for a comprehensive water scheme in this State. I think that in the expression of that regret he has joined the select band—in a hopeless minority and closely connected with his own

political affiliations—of those who alone regret that that legislation, as introduced last year, was not acceptable to Parliament. The people most concerned were not enthusiastic about it. Even the Commonwealth Government whose financial help was required to make the proposal feasible, has—if it has not roundly condemned the scheme as proposed—so altered it and has accepted responsibility for such an amended and abbreviated scheme that it bears little relationship to that originally introduced into this House, except for that portion which had reference to the north-eastern wheatbelt.

It seems to me that the people responsible for the introduction of that legislation would be well advised to forget their share in it, because it would appear either that the Minister who introduced it accepted the proposals of his technical officers without inquiry as to the economic implications, or that it was simply a barefaced political stunt that backfired. When some of the hon. members who are and have been supporters of the previous Government in this State come here, within six months of a change in administration, and parade to this House and the public of the State the conditions obtaining in relation to such matters as railway barracks and quarters for certain of the railway employees, and ask for immediate or early action to effect alterations in those conditions, it is well to remind them that for 17 years past they had ample opportunity, through their own political affiliations, to effect such improvements.

Hon. E. M. Davies: We could not do anything during the war.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: You could not do anything before the war!

Hon. E. M. Davies: Yes, we could.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: Why did you not do it?

Hon. G. Bennetts: The Labour Government made the money available.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I wonder where it found the money. For about 20 years we have had a policy of drift and do little or do nothing, with prevarication and ineptitude in administration. These conditions and amenities were shockingly neglected by Governments that professed to represent the men concerned. Had private industry been the employer, it would not have been allowed to carry on.

Insofar as matters more directly dealt with by the Speech are concerned—I am supporting the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply—it is appropriate that reference be made to the question of public transport and the condition into which nearly all of it has fallen and certainly that portion with which people in the country are mainly concerned, namely, the railways. Notwithstanding all the sins of omission and commission of the previous Administration and irrespective of all the difficulties that the present Government may experience, I think the greatest tragedy it has inherited is our so-called system of railways. As a public utility serving a people in the twentieth century, it has been allowed to deteriorate into a derelict and decrepit undertaking of rags and tatters that only wholesale reorganisation entailing great expenditure will restore to reasonable order.

I consider that members and the people of the State must face the issue squarely. The railways have been starved for funds for maintenance and improvements, and starved for such a time that they have reached the stage where nothing but wholesale reorganisation—and I might say rebuilding—will be necessary to restore them to a state that will enable them to serve the people satisfactorily. Starting with the permanent way, going on to the rollingstock and to the higher administration, all these phases, I think, must be subjected to a very searching inquiry, which it would appear they are about to get. The people and Parliament must be prepared to face the bill of costs that will be entailed in restoring the railways to a reasonable condition.

The railways at the moment are at the lowest point of their efficiency, and it is doubly unfortunate that they should have reached that stage at a time when the people are realising the efficiency and adaptability of other modes of transport. Despite what may be said to the contrary, I very much doubt whether those other modes of transport would be able to cope with traffic, including freight, that must be handled as cheaply as it can be by a reasonably efficient railway system. Unfortunately, the railways are in such an inefficient state that comparisons are being drawn between them and other modes of transport, particularly road transport. We have to face the fact that we cannot turn round, as is often advocated by people who speak without think-

ing, and scrap the railways. A sum of £27,000,000 of public money is involved, and even if we could bear the loss of that money, we have to remember that there are certain kinds of traffic for which the railways are absolutely necessary. Neither can we face the lifting of all controls on road transport until such time as we have a thorough overhaul of the railways and are able to determine what freight and traffic can best be handled by the railways and what can best be left to road transport.

I suggest to the Government that it is high time the Railway Department gave some thought to embarking upon a measure of road transport itself. The people will not be prepared indefinitely to put up with the restrictions imposed upon all other means of transport, and while I think they are prepared to allow reasonable time for the rehabilitation of the railways—that is a popular word nowadays—I consider that, in order to move with the times, a more progressive spirit is necessary in the higher administration and that there is an opportunity for the railways, as a public utility, to adopt a measure of road transport.

About 15 years ago, when the State Transport Co-ordination Act was brought into operation, I took a leading part in my district in opposing its application. Perhaps I have not given as much thought to the problem in recent times, but with the changing conditions I have regarded motor transport as a competitor with the railways. When I speak of a competitor with the railways, I do not refer to efficiency or speed; I have in mind particularly fares and freights. My experience of happenings in the country districts during the loco. strike last November, showed that there are people who think that the cure-all for our transport problem is to throw the door wide open to motor transport, but those people ought to reconsider their beliefs. In 1931 or 1932, road transport could successfully compete with the railways for a large amount of traffic at competitive prices, particularly stock, but during the loco. strike last year, freights 100 per cent. and more above the railway charge were being asked by carriers from districts on the Great Southern, so that we have to consider the question from that angle also. I feel sure that once the present Administration is satisfied what the railways can handle and what road

transport can handle at a comparable freight rate, it will face the issue and give to each mode of transport the scope for its operation which it is best suited to carry out.

I have held for some considerable time past that the greatest enemy to railway administration is the State Transport Co-ordination Act. As that measure was administered it became not a transport co-ordination Act, but a transport elimination Act. It has fostered in the mind of the railway administration a belief that the railways can make the public take anything, because the department is protected from any form of competition whatever. I am afraid that that attitude of mind still persists in the higher administration, although, to be fair, I do not think the Commissioner himself is nearly as badly affected, if he is affected at all, as are some of his senior advisers.

I had hoped that with the change of Government we could have expected at a very early date some better appreciation of the conditions under which country people are living and of their lack of amenities and opportunities. Though there has been in some of the departments an enlightened feeling in that regard, I am afraid that is not so in the case of one of the departments of a Minister in this House. I refer to the Health Department. I desire to speak on the subject of the supply of facilities and equipment to country hospitals.

The position at the Wagin Hospital at the moment, in my opinion, is no credit to the Health Department. In order to improve the hospital in that town, the residents, somewhere about 1929, collected a large sum of money in the district. The improvements were duly made. A few years ago the residents took similar action when it was desired to add a maternity wing. Of course, they received assistance as well. The people collected one-third of the cost, the Lotteries Commission contributed one-third and the Medical Department the remaining third. In the opinion of the people of the district, and I heartily agree with them, the hospital should have better x-ray equipment than the type which it has been suggested they should accept. They have collected a considerable sum of money, £600 to £700, with a view to purchasing a fairly big x-ray

plant costing between £1,500 and £1,800. They asked the Medical Department to provide one-third of the cost and intended to approach the Lotteries Commission for the remaining third. However, all that the Medical Department was prepared to contribute was one-third of the cost of a plant of the value of £500.

That plant would certainly x-ray a fractured finger or a broken arm, but it is impossible to drive into the mind of the Medical Department the fact that between Albany and Perth there is no x-ray equipment which might be used for a major operation or used to prevent a major operation, or to carry out exploratory work. Surely, notwithstanding these reasons or excuses, the country people have some right to expect—and I consider they are justified in expecting—that the present Government will give matters of this kind a little more consideration and thought. In this case all that the department will accept responsibility for is the sum of about £170. That is what the department has told people who are trying to help themselves and who are entitled to consideration. The department told those people that if they so desired they could purchase the plant they wanted themselves. Nothing like that was said when the Perth Hospital and the King Edward Memorial Hospital were built and equipment supplied to them. The Wagin people, as I said, are prepared to find a large share of the expenditure themselves and I hope the Minister will give some further consideration to the matter. I support the motion.

On motion by Hon. C. G. Latham, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.13 p.m.