

sinister in the Bill. If that be so, it will be necessary for him to remove the idea that will gain wider and wider acceptance that the Bill is merely erected as another Aunt Sally to be knocked down. It is another hardy annual, another slender perennial, another political hack that the other side has done some hard riding on.

The Minister for Justice: Volubility and tautology predominate.

Mr. LESLIE: That is all right. I would accept that from the Minister without worry, but I fear it is an utterance by him to cover what he realises are the weaknesses that exist in the Bill.

Mr. Withers: It brings out reactionary traits in some Opposition members!

Mr. LESLIE: Let the Minister be convinced of this fact: That the Bill will require to be considerably amended to make it acceptable and that unless he is prepared to accept those amendments that are aimed at bringing the Bill—

The Minister for Justice: You will tell the minority in another place to throw it out!

Mr. LESLIE: —nearer to meeting the declared purpose of the Bill, namely, to readjust the relationships between the two Houses, then with all due respect to what the Minister has said about there being no sinister purpose or motive, the introduction of the measure will be considered to be rank hypocrisy and absolute insincerity; and those charges will lie at the door of the present Ministry.

The Minister for Works: That is rank cheek on your part!

On motion by Mr. W. Hegney, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 10.11 p.m.*

## Legislative Council.

*Wednesday, 21st August, 1946.*

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

### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

#### *Eleventh Day—Conclusion.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [4.36]: It is with great pleasure that I add my congratulations to those already extended to you, Sir, upon your appointment as President of this Chamber. Your 24 years as a member of the House, during nearly 20 of which you have served as Chairman of Committees, have provided you with a wealth of experience which should render you a very worthy occupant of the high office to which you have succeeded. The Legislative Council, which is the oldest institution in this State, numbers among its Presidents men who have served the State long and well, and whose names rank very high in the history of Western Australia. I would like to record that from 1832 until 1870, the Governor, or officer administering the Government, presided over its deliberations. It was then a nominer Chamber. In 1870, the Council became a wholly elective body, and the Governor of the State ceased to be a member.

From then until 1886, Sir Luke Leake presided as Speaker. He was succeeded by Sir J. G. Lee Steere, who held office until the establishment, in 1890, of responsible government when Sir Thomas Cockburn-Campbell was elected the first President of this Chamber. Following his retirement, five gentlemen occupied the Chair prior to your appointment, Mr. President. Not the least of those five was your immediate predecessor, Sir John Kirwan, who presided over this Chamber for a record term of nearly 20 years. The wisdom and courtesy he displayed during this long period, his tact and willingness to assist any member at any time, have helped to mark Sir John as one

of the State's most distinguished citizens. I, personally, have many happy memories of my parliamentary associations with him, and I trust that he will be spared to enjoy his retirement for many years.

My congratulations, too, are due to Mr. Seddon on his appointment as Chairman of Committees which is, as we know, a very important and onerous position. It is a role to which I think he will bring a great deal of experience and knowledge. I heartily endorse the hopes of other members that Mr. Seddon will soon be restored fully to good health. To those members who have been appointed as Deputy Chairmen of Committees, and to the new members of the House as well, go my congratulations and my best wishes for a successful term of office.

With regard to my appointment as Agent General for Western Australia, I desire to express my appreciation of the many kind remarks made by members. After close upon 23 years in this Chamber I shall miss the atmosphere that has always prevailed here and I will also miss the many happy associations that I have formed. I am, however, looking forward with a great deal of interest and pleasure to my assuming the duties of the office of Agent General in London. Things are very different in the Old Country at the present time and I believe the next two or three years will be among the most important years for the British Empire.

Hon. A. Thomson: Hear, hear!

**The CHIEF SECRETARY:** Great changes may take place. Big moves are being contemplated. While it is not to be expected that I will be actually associated with those matters, I shall be in London, the centre of the Empire, and it will be particularly interesting to me to be a witness perhaps of some of those things that must inevitably, in my opinion, take place in the next year or so. Members can rest assured that I shall do my utmost to represent this State in the way they would desire it to be represented in London.

Turning now to the Address-in-reply, members as usual have taken the opportunity to traverse a wide range of subjects, considerable attention being given to important matters such as housing, education, health, transport, electricity supplies and secondary industries. Discussion, too, has taken place in regard to matters that are

not within the orbit of the State Government but come under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth authority. Members will be aware that it will not be possible for me to deal with each point that has been raised, but I will endeavour to follow my usual practice of mentioning as many as possible.

Education has received its customary attention from members. In connection with Sir Hal Colebatch's complaint that the Government is not cognisant of education's importance in the priority of public expenditure, I must point out that expenditure on education for the financial year 1945-46, namely, £1,002,520, was £114,000 higher than it was the previous year, and the estimate for the current year, which is £1,154,400, is £152,000 higher than for 1945-46. I think those figures are very illuminating, more particularly when we compare them with the figures for the financial year 1932-33 when the Labour Government was returned to power. In 1932-33 the expenditure on education was £553,846, while in 1933-34 the expenditure was £576,296. Members will therefore see that there has been an increase of approximately 100 per cent. in the expenditure of the Education Department from 1933 to the present day.

In his very able maiden speech, Mr. Simpson touched on several aspects connected with education. I can assure him that the Government is giving urgent attention to the need for providing satisfactory school buildings, but any immediate amelioration of the position is affected by the Commonwealth housing legislation, which is being implemented with the co-operation of the State, and the general shortages of men and materials. The case quoted by Mr. Simpson of a school being conducted in an open garage has not been brought to the notice of the Education Department. The inference is that it is not a school coming within the jurisdiction of the department.

Another suggestion from Mr. Simpson that is already in operation is the inclusion of civics in school curriculum. A perusal of the Education Department's curriculum for primary schools will reveal that considerable emphasis is given to subjects such as social and moral education, history and citizenship, and similar topics. Mr. Simpson mentioned that parents of children gaining scholarships should not be penalised where the parents' income exceeds £7 weekly, by the children not

being eligible for the monetary benefit of their scholarships. This embargo does not now apply, the means test in this connection having been abolished as from the 1st July, 1946.

It was suggested by Mr. Bennetts and Mr. Forrest that parents in outlying areas, whose circumstances are not favourable, should be allowed a subsidy to enable their children to take advantage of better educational facilities. I am pleased to advise these members that the Education Department, as from the 1st July, 1946, has commenced the payment of a subsidy of £30 per annum for each child, to parents living in distant areas who are required to board children away from home in order that they may attend school. This applies throughout the State, with the exception of the South-West Land Division, where the payment is £15 for each child. Where parents prefer to employ a governess to supervise in their own homes the correspondence lessons supplied by the Education Department, a subsidy of £15 per annum for each child so supervised is paid, and no means test is applied for either of these subsidies.

Reference was made by Mr. Dimmitt to several matters such as the lighting in certain class rooms, the position of blackboards and sanitary conveniences. I can assure him that matters such as these are constantly receiving the attention of the department. Here again I must tell the hon. member that the incident he quoted with regard to the conditions under which a sewing mistress was forced to give her lessons to the children has not been the subject of a complaint to the Education Department, but the matter is being investigated.

As usual, Mr. Baxter criticised the Government's efforts to establish secondary industries in Western Australia and waxed caustic concerning the development of certain ventures. Indeed, he asserted that no private undertaking would employ the methods that have been adopted. While it is admitted that the expenditure on the Chandler alunite industry was £383,800 to the 30th June, 1946, and that production to that date had amounted to only £60,672, it must be realised that operations up to the present have been mainly of a developmental nature. The stage has now been reached when it can be confidently predicted that the industry will stabilise itself, and that

ultimately it will produce Australia's requirements of potash and at a price competitive with the imported article. The circumstances surrounding the development of this industry are comparable with those that were experienced in the growth of what is now one of the largest chemical undertakings and one of the soundest enterprises in Australia. I refer to the Electric Zinc Proprietary Limited of Tasmania, during the developmental stages of which debentures for £1,000,000 were floated.

Certain strictures were passed by Mr. Baxter on the Wundowie charcoal-iron industry. He said that no production whatever had taken place there and that he did not think anything would ever be produced there. He wanted to know how Wundowie could turn out charcoal-iron in competition with the Broken Hill Proprietary Co. It may interest him to know that the economies of this undertaking have been thoroughly investigated, and that the plant is expected to produce charcoal-iron at a price competitive with pig iron produced elsewhere in Australia. No production has yet been obtained at Wundowie owing to the delay in the completion of the plant. The hon. member must surely realise that war-caused shortages and restrictions have been responsible for this delay. Although the manpower position has now improved, shortages of material still constitute a problem. For example, a serious delay was caused early this year owing to the shortage of cement; also, the supply of certain vital equipment is now nine months behind schedule, a state of affairs which cannot be overcome.

Another statement without foundation by Mr. Baxter is his allegation that an extraction plant had been erected at Wundowie at a cost of £80,000 in order to camouflage what he called the failure of the main project. This assertion is obviously ludicrous when it is realised that the extraction plant to which he refers, far from being a new development, is a wood distillation refinery which was an integral part of the original plans of the industry.

I feel that I must take advantage of the opportunity to reply to Mr. Baxter's ungenerous reflection upon the war effort of the State Engineering Works, which he referred to under their old title of the State Implement Works. He stated that these

works, in common with other concerns in Western Australia, had only scratched the war effort. The work done there may appear small in comparison with the vast war effort of the United Nations, but it was none the less valuable and essential to the prosecution of the war in the Pacific. Its worth has been recognised in the award of an O.B.E. to the Manager, Mr. G. Kekwick, and of the American Order of Merit (Civil Branch) to Mr. W. Archibald, who was employed on the floating dock. Mr. Archibald's decoration is, I understand, one of the only two such awards made by the American Government in the whole of Australia. In addition, grateful commanding officers have recorded their appreciation on many occasions by virtue of mentions in despatches, while laudatory letters have been received from high-ranking officers of the United States, British, Dutch and Australian Navies, the captains of merchant vessels of several nationalities, and from shipping and industrial firms.

The war effort of the State Engineering Works embraced a wide field. This is not the time to detail these activities, but it may not be out of place to record some of them. They included—

The degaussing, with the willing co-operation of several private firms, of 79 ships;

The refitting and repair of 411 submarines and 247 surface craft;

The manufacture of a 290-ton cradle for a slipway;

3 Philippine lighters;

100 universal carriers;

828,498 malleable track lines for carriers;

50 steam cargo winches.

Of 2,300 high tensile cast iron drum brakes for war purposes, rejects amounted to less than four per cent., a much lower figure than was the case in the Eastern States. Many other important contracts were ably carried out. During the last three years of the war the personnel of the works totalled between 500 and 600, the men averaging 70 hours of work weekly. This is the concern of which Mr. Baxter was so critical. The works are most modernly equipped and have paid full interest and shown a profit for each of the past five years.

It seems that Sir Hal Colebatch was under the impression that for many years the 50

cycle frequency has been generally adopted outside Western Australia as the most suitable for electricity supply. Believing this to be so, he asks why the new plant ordered ten years ago for the East Perth Power Station was of 40 cycle frequency and not 50. I have had inquiries made and would like to inform Sir Hal that the unit to which he referred was a 25,000 kilowatt turbo-generator which was ordered from Great Britain in 1935 and installed at East Perth in 1938, and as he states it was of 40 cycle frequency. At the time the unit was ordered there was no such thing in Great Britain as an accepted standard for alternating current supply. England was then putting her electricity supply house in order and building up the grid system, which became the compelling force towards standardisation of frequency in that country. The McGowen report, which was published in 1935 and was the basis of the re-organisation of electricity supplies in England, revealed that apart from differences in frequency in the A.C. system, no fewer than 43 different declared voltages were in use. This shows, as I have already said, that even in a country so highly industrialised and progressive as Great Britain there was no standardisation of frequency as recently as the middle 1930's.

Considerable concern was expressed by Sir Hal regarding the cost to the industrial and domestic user of the eventual change-over from 40 to 50 cycle in this State. I am informed that so far as the industrial user is concerned, the existing 40 cycle motors will be quite effective when operating with 50 cycle frequency supply. The speed of the motors will increase, but in nearly every case this can be rectified by an adjustment of pulleys either on the motor or on the machine being driven. When the time arrives for the change-over to be commenced, the Government will give consideration to the allocation of expenses incurred by the industrialist and the householder.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: I hope so.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Bolton's accusation that the Government was responsible for the recent power breakdown is hardly in accordance with the facts. To anyone who has taken the trouble to study the position carefully it is quite apparent that the breakdown and the present position were brought about by a combination of circumstances caused by the war. Two factors

stand out. Firstly, the impossibility of acquiring additional generating units during the war—

Hon. L. B. Bolton: It should have been done before the war.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: And secondly, tremendous development of secondary industries in the metropolitan area in the war effort. These may be said to have been the sole causes of the circumstances which developed and which have been outside the control of the Government. When the 25,000 unit turbo-generator was installed at East Perth in 1938 the total capacity of the station was 57,000 kilowatts. During the intervening period from 1939 to 1945, when the whole of the world's electrical manufacturing industry was concentrated on war requirements, the winter peak load advanced considerably, reaching a maximum in July this year of 51,000 kilowatts, whereas in 1939 the winter peak load was only 33,000 kilowatts. The winter peak loading is, of course, the maximum demand on the installed capacity of the East Perth Power Station.

The Government was fully aware of the position which was developing and, immediately it became possible to place orders for additional equipment, tenders were called and the General Manager, Mr. W. H. Taylor, was sent to England to expedite the placing of the contracts at the earliest possible moment.

In May, 1945, contracts were let for the supply and installation of two 25,000 turbo-generator sets, with their boilers, at South Fremantle, and it is hoped to have the first set ready for operation at South Fremantle towards the latter end of 1948. In his remarks Mr. Bolton said:—

We understand that the new power station being built at South Fremantle will be ready in about three years, but if I know anything of matters of this kind when undertaken by Government departments, four or five years will, I am sorry to say, be nearer the mark.

As a matter of fact, the Government's responsibility is restricted to the preparation of the site, provision of foundations and construction of condenser water intake. The balance of the work is included in the contract, and whether it is ready in 1948 or 1949 will depend upon the expedition exhibited by the contractors and not by the

Government departments, who have already made very considerable progress towards completion of their sections of the work.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: I hope you are right, but I still have my doubts.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: If we are not right, I hope the hon. member will not blame the Government in the circumstances that I have related. It is a fact that the plant at East Perth, for the reasons I have quoted, has not now a reasonable margin of surplus capacity to guarantee that there will not be some restrictions during the period which must elapse before South Fremantle comes into operation.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: We had some this morning.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: But it is very unlikely that the two largest units at East Perth will again be out of action at the same time. The Government and the Electricity Commission are quite aware of the necessity for keeping ahead of the continuously expanding demand for electricity, and at the present time an examination of the position is being made with a view to very early decision as to what additional plant is required and when it should be ordered. The Government is fully seized of the fact that, if industry is to expand, sufficient electricity must be available to enable it to do so.

In view of the very small margin of surplus capacity now available at East Perth, and the fact that the demand will increase before South Fremantle comes into operation, the Commission is inquiring both in Australia and abroad as to the immediate availability of any quickly installed units which may assist industry to continue at normal pressure through the period referred to. Mr. Bolton's suggestion that the Government should instal auxiliary power plants for its own instrumentalities is, he may rest assured, not one that has been overlooked. He stated that if this were done, and a breakdown of power should occur, industry would be in a position to continue its operations without restriction. The Government's plan, to which I have already referred, of obtaining auxiliary units for the assistance of industry in general and not for Government instrumentalities alone, appears a much wiser idea.

It is not surprising, in view of the importance of the project, that attention was given by several members to the War Service Land Settlement Scheme. Mr. E. H. H. Hall wondered whether any action would be taken to include certain properties at Mingenew in the scheme. I can assure the hon. member that a considerable amount of attention has been given to the possibility of settling ex-Servicemen in this district, which has been visited by Mr. Fyfe, Director of Land Settlement, who in company with local representatives, has inspected a number of properties there. It is necessary to explain, however, that the law in this State does not provide for the resumption of land for settlement except where it can be shown to the satisfaction of the Supreme Court that resumption would result in a substantial increase in production, together with a reasonable increase in the number of persons usually resident on the land.

Every effort is being made to buy holdings suitable for the scheme, and 917 offers of properties for sale have been received from agricultural areas. A list has been made of the large properties in the State which have not been offered, and Mr. Fyfe is writing to the owners explaining the difficulties encountered in obtaining suitable farms for ex-Servicemen and inquiring whether they wish to sell their holdings. It must be emphasised that only good properties in reliable districts will stand the tests as to earning capacity which it is necessary to apply under the scheme in order to ensure that the ex-Servicemen who are placed in possession will have good prospects for the future and will be able to avoid being overburdened with debt. All the authorities are anxious that there shall not be a repetition of what took place after the first world war.

For the information of members it might be as well if I informed the House of the standards required for the war service land settlement scheme. When members understand these conditions I think they will appreciate the fact that there are not many holdings in Western Australia at present which would be available for soldier land settlement that would comply with the standards. The first point in the document which has been supplied to me by Mr. Fyfe, the

Director of Land Settlement, deals with dairy farms, in connection with which the following principles are laid down:—

#### Dairy Farms.

(1) Each farm must have a carrying capacity ultimately when fully developed of not less than 50 cow units.

(2) It must have a habitation, water supply and access before an ex-serviceman can be allowed to occupy it.

(3) He cannot be allowed to occupy it at this stage until the Commonwealth approves of the proposals which have been submitted for occupation before all requirements can be met.

(4) Before he can be granted his lease (99 years not 99) the property must be improved to the following extent—

- (a) Four-roomed house lined, with house water supply, bathroom, sleepout, wash-house, copper and troughs.
- (b) Dairy and other buildings required for the working of the farm.
- (c) Clearing pastures, paddocks, yards; water supplies necessary to permit the farm to carry 30 cow units.
- (d) Road access and educational facilities.
- (e) At least 30 cows for milking; the number to be increased during the first year of the lease to 40 cows.
- (f) Plant, motor vehicle, tools and equipment required for the working of the farm and other sundry requirements such as horse, pigs, etc.

It must be clear, however, that it may be one, two or three years before all these can be provided, but if the Commonwealth approves of the proposals from this State each settler will work on wages or contract on his farm under an occupation agreement during the establishment period, and he will progressively obtain the stock and plant. The property will be improved by the Field Superintendent's gangs or by contracts with the least possible delay.

The settler may, of course, acquire his own stock and plant without assistance under the Scheme.

Tenders have been called for the renovation of the first 20 houses on dairy farms to be allotted under Occupation Agreement.

The remaining portion of the document is as follows:—

#### Farms in the Wheat and Sheep Areas.

The living standards will not be less than those required for the dairy farms, and as the properties will be developed in each case until within one year from the date of commencement of the lease, the settler should be able to meet his payments for the house and other structural improvements and such advances as have been necessary for stock and plant in addition, of course, to payment of rent for the land and clearing which existed

at the date of allotment. In some cases, occupation during an establishment period will be arranged.

I thought it was just as well to give the House the benefit of that information, because we are all aware of large numbers of farms—so-called farms—that would take years to develop to the state required under that arrangement, so it is not surprising that, notwithstanding the greatest possible activity on the part of the director and his staff, up to date it has only been possible to have a very limited number of farms available for settlement, either at present or in the very near future.

Hon. L. Craig: A 40-cow establishment is going to cost a great deal of money.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Thomson in his lengthy comment on the re-establishment of ex-Servicemen devoted some time to the War Service Land Settlement Scheme. He raised a strong objection to the number of authorities that under the agreement with the Commonwealth have to be consulted prior to approval being given for the purchase of a property. The procedure mentioned, however, is essential, and although it may appear likely to cause delay, the liaison between the Commonwealth and State officers facilitates the progress of purchases. As an example I quote a case in which a property of 12,000 acres was offered for £33,000. Although the owner was in the United States, all the procedure referred to was completed within 14 days and agreement reached to purchase the property for £30,000. Mr. Thomson's allegation that very little progress has been made is misleading, for the reason that at this stage progress cannot be measured by the number of farms allotted. The benefit of the amount of work already completed will be realised after allotment of properties commences. This can be exemplified by the fact that for some considerable time approximately 300 men have been employed on work incidental to the scheme, and as the supply of heavy equipment, such as bulldozers and tractors increases, the rate of progress will be stepped up.

Hon. A. Thomson: My main contention is that, if the State had had control, it would have had men on the land long ago.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is pointed out that a considerable proportion of the 300 men I have referred to are applicants

under the scheme and are gaining experience in the development of farms. They are acquiring local knowledge and preserving such capital as they may have been able to accumulate during the war. Mr. Thomson asserted that the Government had indulged in rather remarkable propaganda in order to counteract any criticisms offered concerning the scheme. I am afraid the hon. member is serving his own ends by interpreting the publicity given to the scheme in whatever manner he thinks fit. This publicity has had one purpose—to let ex-Servicemen know from time to time where they stand. These men are surely entitled to be informed what their prospects are of obtaining farms within a reasonable period, and any flagrant attempt to misinterpret such action is misleading and harmful. The hon. member waxed eloquent on what was, to his idea, the mistake of making an agreement regarding soldier settlement with the Commonwealth. He thought the matter could quite easily have been left solely in the hands of the State authorities.

While there is no doubt that the State could satisfactorily administer a settlement scheme for ex-Servicemen, the enormous cost of such a project necessitates the assistance of the Commonwealth Government, which has undertaken to provide the several millions of money required. It is therefore only reasonable that the Commonwealth should expect to have some say in the expenditure of this large sum. It is pointed out that each State has an agreement of this nature with the Commonwealth, and generally the financial particulars are similar in each case. Hon. members may be interested to know that, although it is expected that 20 dairy farms will be allotted in October, no guarantee to this effect can be given, as Commonwealth approval has not yet been received to proposals from this State that ex-Servicemen be allowed to occupy holdings under an occupation agreement before the full requirements in regard to improvements, stock and plant, under the War Service Land Settlement Agreement Act, can be met. Furthermore, although tenders are being called for renovations to houses, and priority has been obtained for building materials, it is not certain that the required work can be completed in the time stated, but it is considered that prospects of success in this direction are good.

As usual, Dr. Hislop gave considerable attention to matters relating to the medical and health services. He mentioned that the appointment by the Perth City Council of a half-time medical officer of health was a move in the right direction, but that it still did not meet the requirements of the city, in which he stated there was ample work for such an officer to devote his full time. He suggested that if the City Council could not see its way clear to appoint a full-time officer to police its own district, neighbouring councils should co-operate by utilising the officer's services, thereby placing him on a full-time basis. It so happens, I understand, that the appointment made by the City Council is intended to follow this course. It is hoped that the balance of the officer's time will be utilised by other local authorities.

Another suggestion by Dr. Hislop was the division of the State into health areas, each of which would be under the control of a medical officer of health who would be responsible not to local authorities but to the Commissioner of Public Health. Such a system, although not without merit, rather bristles with difficulties, an important one being the lack of medical men possessing public health qualifications who would be eligible for appointment. At the present time health inspectors, although officers of local governing authorities, operate as agents for the Commissioner of Public Health, and it is the Commissioner's intention to maintain closer contact and direction of these officers than has been the case for a considerable time.

In another part of his speech Dr. Hislop dealt with the scourge of tuberculosis, to which the Government, realising that it is one of the greatest medico-social problems of the day, has given much time and thought. The hon. member mentioned that the spectre of economic worry faced many sufferers from tuberculosis who, fearing that their dependants would be left in want, were often chary of obtaining medical treatment until it was too late. He suggested that a contributory scheme, on a basis similar to that of superannuation, would do away with this economic fear and would enable a person to obtain treatment in the early throes of disease, knowing that his enforced absence from work would not severely affect his family. Such a scheme, I

understand, received the consideration of the Commonwealth Government, but for some reason or other was not approved.

A Bill has been brought before the Commonwealth Parliament proposing that £250,000 be set aside for distribution to the dependants of T.B. sufferers. Western Australia's share of this sum would be about £18,000, an amount which I am afraid will not go far. The Commonwealth Parliament recently approved of legislation providing £50,000 as a pound for pound subsidy for the States to spend upon new diagnostic work, and another £50,000, also on a pound for pound subsidy basis, for after-care work. These two amounts are to be divided among the States on a population basis, and in each case Western Australia's share will be about £3,500 only. To increase those amounts would require Commonwealth legislation.

The State Government has under consideration a comprehensive scheme for the control and eventual elimination of tuberculosis. This scheme, which has been prepared by Dr. Hensell, the Director of Tuberculosis, and Dr. Cook, the Commissioner of Public Health, is fraught with serious difficulties, but every effort will be made to put it into operation. It is expected that an active anti-T.B. campaign would discover a considerable number of cases requiring hospital treatment, and the provision of suitable accommodation would be a major difficulty. It is estimated that construction of a new hospital of 200-bed capacity would be required. The temporary use of Northam Military Hospital is contemplated, but this would be only for expediency, as the premises are quite unsuitable for permanent use.

The provision of nursing staffs is another grave problem, for we are also faced with the necessity to increase the present staffs by about 15 per cent. in order to implement the new award allowing for a 44-hour working week. In addition, the trained staffs in existing hospitals are approximately 120 short of the standard quota. The Government has approved of recommendations by the Commissioner of Public Health which, when put into operation, will alter the machinery of training of all nurses and will provide for nurses specially trained for work in T.B. hospitals and sanatoria. This will require new legislation which it is hoped to introduce this session. Dr. Hislop spoke at length on the new Perth Hospital, eulogising the work



done there by the Principal Architect and his officers and stating that when completed the hospital will bear comparison with any other in Australia. He tempered his remarks, however, with a lengthy criticism of the planning, or as the hon. member expressed it, the lack of planning incidental to the hospital.

There have been a number of features in connection with the progress of construction of the Perth Hospital with which the Government and the Perth Hospital Board are by no means satisfied. These are, however, in general beyond the control of anyone. The hospital was planned and construction commenced prior to the commencement of the war. During the greater part of the war, any work on the hospital was impossible, and during the same period medical knowledge and practices have developed very considerably, as, for instance, by the greatly increased use of blood and the discovery of the sulphadiazine drugs and penicillin. The result is that some features originally planned in the hospital have become obsolete and other requirements have developed. This has necessitated considerable alteration to the plans.

When the hospital was planned, it was considered that the prospect of a medical school in Western Australia was so remote that it need not be considered in relation to the building. That position has changed materially, and the prospect of a medical school is now much more promising. There are many other features which have disturbed the original plan and which, in many instances, could not have been foreseen. For instance, the size of the proposed hospital has already been increased by one-third in floor space. There have also been tremendous difficulties in securing engineering equipment required for the hospital, and even now this seems likely to cause delay in the final opening of the hospital.

The question of quarters for the nursing staff is another problem. When the hospital was first planned it was considered that accommodation for 250 nurses would be sufficient. Because of the changes in medical practice, together with, as I have already mentioned, the enlargement of the floor space by at least one-third, an increase in the estimate of the nursing staff from 250 to 450 or more has been made, and the 44-hour week, which will commence shortly, will also increase the hospital's requirements in this

direction. Members will appreciate the very big problem involved in providing quarters for the large number of nurses that will be necessary when the hospital is in operation.

Little progress could be made with the building of nurses' living quarters during the war period but very active steps are now being taken to ensure that the opening of the hospital is not delayed by the lack of these quarters. In the original lay-out provision was made for quarters on the present site. In view of the unavoidable extension to the original plans it became necessary to seek additional space and an approach was made by the Under Secretary for Health, with the concurrence of the Minister, to the Perth City Council for the transfer of the whole or a substantial part of the land opposite the hospital, fronting Wellington-street, which would provide adequate space for the development of Perth Hospital now foreseen. The City Council is giving consideration to this proposal and it is hoped that it will agree to the transfer which would, of course, be on a basis of exchange and compensation. This site would permit of the development of a comprehensive health centre not excelled elsewhere in Australia.

The advisability of obtaining the property adjacent to the hospital owned by Macfarlane and Co. Ltd. was stressed by Dr. Hislop. At the time this was first suggested, it might have met the needs that could then be foreseen, but at the present time it would be far from adequate. The area in question is only half-an-acre, and if the continuation of Irwin-street, which Dr. Hislop suggests, were provided, it would be reduced to little more than a quarter-of-an-acre. Behind Macfarlane's building and fronting Wellington-street is an electric sub-station controlled by the City of Perth. Dr. Hislop speaks blithely of removing this, but that is a problem very much more easily disposed of by word than by deed. The Commonwealth Departments were approached with regard to relinquishing their claim to Macfarlane's building but without result, and it is not intended to proceed further in view of the inadequacy of the area.

A number of members commented on the housing problem, which is very serious. Members, if they are not already aware, will be interested to learn that during the last three pre-war years there was an esti-

mated average number of 2,000 houses constructed annually. As a result of the decline in building construction during the earlier years of the war and the almost complete cessation after Japan commenced hostilities, there was an accumulated shortage of over 10,000 houses when the war ceased. The difficulties experienced in recommencing a building programme after a cessation of 2½ years can be readily imagined. Building operatives had enlisted in the Forces, or had transferred to other occupations, and industries which had manufactured building material had concentrated on war work or had ceased operations. However, an effort was made in the latter half of 1944 to commence to overcome the lag, and the first contract under the Commonwealth-State Rental Housing Scheme was signed in August, 1944. Under that contract 331 houses have been completed and 312 are at present under construction—a total building effort of 643 houses as at the 31st July, 1946.

In addition to this building programme, the Workers' Homes Board has recently undertaken a scheme for the temporary reconstruction of Army huts, and work of this nature is now proceeding in three areas. Fifty huts have already been occupied, and it is expected that within a few months there will be approximately 200 families housed in these premises. The conversion of the huts is being undertaken for the board by the Public Works Department, which is also building houses for the Commonwealth-State rental housing programme.

The efforts of the Workers' Homes Board cannot be judged by the group construction programme alone. The board is responsible for ensuring that private contractors and those desiring to build their own houses independently of Government assistance are afforded all the facilities for construction that are available. To this end the board has approved of the erection of a large number of private dwellings throughout the State, the figures for the past 2½ years being:—

1944	..	..	..	668
1945	..	..	..	1,109
1946	..	..	..	880

—a total of 2,657 homes. During the past six months 880 permits were issued for the construction of private homes. If to this figure is added the 239 Commonwealth-

State rental homes commenced during this period, a total of 1,119 is arrived at. This is a greater number than was erected over a similar period in an average pre-war year, and as conditions improve, the effort to overcome the building lag should quicken.

A case was instanced by Mr. W. R. Hall of a person and his family who were forced to shift from Grant's Patch to Kalgoorlie and who dismantled their house with the intention of re-erecting it at Kalgoorlie, but were refused a permit by the Workers' Homes Board. I have had inquiries made at the Workers' Homes Board, but in the absence of the name of the householder concerned it is unable to trace the case. As members know, the board deals with many hundreds of applications each month. If the facts mentioned by Mr. Hall were submitted to the board, it is difficult to understand the reason for the refusal. It has been the policy of the board to extend every consideration to applicants from Goldfields towns, and particularly to those persons proposing to use second-hand materials. If the hon. member will contact Mr. Smith, the Assistant Secretary of the Workers' Homes Board, and provide him with additional particulars, the matter will be further investigated.

The position regarding the shortage of seasoned timber for building purposes was explored by Mr. Thomson, who suggested that this State's exports of timber be curtailed on the principle that charity begins at home. He also advocated the construction of additional drying kilns. As the hon. member is aware, the Government is giving serious consideration to the question of providing sufficient timber for the housing scheme as well as for other essential requirements. The Premier has already stated in another place that "although quantities of timber to be exported to the Eastern States were fixed by the Commonwealth Controller of Timber, the State Government was watching the position closely to safeguard the interests of the people of Western Australia."

When the production programme was being drawn up in May last for the period of six months ending December, 1946, it was considered that ample provision was made for all requirements within the State, as well as for the retention of markets considered vital to the industry. The house-building programme at that time was fixed at a lower figure than is now contemplated, and, in view of the intention to construct

an additional number of houses, the position is being analysed to determine ways and means of meeting an increased demand for timber. Sawmillers are being encouraged to increase the output of mills near the metropolitan area, on the assumption that manpower problems are not so acute there as in country centres, where difficulties are experienced in adequately manning the mills and the bush. Any increased output from this source will benefit Western Australia.

Efforts are being made to provide additional supplies for the local market without affecting the sawmillers' commitments. It is true that we are exporting timber to assist other States with their housing programmes, but it must be realised also that there are items necessary for our housing programme that have to be obtained from the Eastern States, and that a certain amount of reciprocity is essential. In addition, the Commonwealth has agreed to the export oversea of a token quantity to retain markets against the time when increased production will be possible from the new mills for which permits have already been granted by the Forests Department. The construction of these new mills, which has been unavoidably delayed on account of material and manpower shortages, will result in additional sawn timber to the extent of 50 per cent. of the present output.

Hon. A. Thomson: One of the greatest problems is that of getting dry timber.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have some information regarding that. Australia's consumption of timber for all requirements has been estimated to be 1,200 million super feet per annum, two-thirds of which will be produced in native timbers, leaving one-third to be imported. Great difficulty is being experienced in obtaining anything like this quantity, with the result that the Eastern States, who are the main consumers of such imported timber, will suffer most from the shortage. Western Australia, as one of two States with an exportable surplus, has therefore been requested to meet some of this deficiency.

In regard to Mr. Thomson's advocacy of the construction of further drying kilns, it must be remembered that kiln drying, although it possesses many advantages and is recommended by the Forests Department, will not solve the shortage problem if there is not sufficient green timber available. Then

again, only in the early life of a kiln can more timber be dried than by the older process of air seasoning. Take for example and simplicity flooring boards. To build a two-kiln installation with a capacity of 1,000 loads per annum would cost about £3,000 and seasoned boards could not be produced from the plant in under seven months. In the remaining five months of the year, 400 loads of seasoned timber would be produced, and thereafter 1,000 loads annually. With the air seasoning method 1,000 loads could be put down immediately, and would be ready during the following 12 months.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Who told you that?

Hon. L. B. Bolton: That is nonsense! Pardon my saying so.

Hon. W. J. Mann: I was told that at Nyamup Mill, where there are four kilns in operation, air drying takes a minimum of two years.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am giving the House the benefit of the advice received from officers of our own Forests Department. They are the people who are controlling the supply of timber in this State.

Hon. W. J. Mann: The advice I am giving you is from the men who are doing it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is all right. I am telling the hon. member that this is the advice of the Forests Department.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: If the timber takes 12 months to air dry, it would dry in a kiln in seven months. I have had experience of it. Your information is entirely wrong.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have already pointed that out to the hon. member. Apparently he did not hear what I said.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: You did not say that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I will repeat what I did say. I said that to build a two-kiln installation with a capacity of 1,000 loads per annum would cost about £3,000, and seasoned boards could not be produced from the plant in under seven months. In the remaining five months of the year 400 loads of seasoned timber would be produced, and thereafter 1,000 loads annually. With the air seasoning method, 1,000 loads could be put down immediately and would be ready during the following 12 months. So far as volume is concerned

the only gain in the kiln system would be the 400 tons in the first 12 months.

Hon. W. J. Mann: From how many kilns?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: From any one kiln. Subsequently the amount of seasoned timber available from both methods would be determined by the amount of green wood available. I suggest to the timber experts in this House that they go along and have a word with the Government advisers in this regard and they will probably be satisfied then that the information I am giving is correct.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: I have been buying timber for years under those conditions, and I know how long it takes to air dry and kiln dry.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I did not know we had so many timber experts in the House.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Some of us have a little knowledge.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Industries Expansion Committee since its inception has dealt exhaustively with the desirability of providing more seasoning kilns in Western Australia and has actually been instrumental in making Commonwealth Government funds available for this purpose. It is understood that the committee would be prepared to recommend to the Commonwealth Government the provision of additional funds on favourable terms to any sawmiller in a position to make satisfactory use of such facilities. It is probable that sawmillers will construct seasoning kilns at some, if not all, of the new mills to be built in the Manjimup-Pemberton districts during the next year or two. The provision of additional seasoning kilns at existing mills is not considered desirable or practicable because of limited output or limited life. I went to the trouble of securing that information because I was rather impressed by the argument submitted by Mr. Thomson. If members do not agree with the statements I have made, I hope they will check up on them by consulting their own friends and the Forests Department.

I can assure Mr. E. H. H. Hall that in its efforts to alleviate the housing shortage the Workers' Homes Board has not overlooked the possibility of utilising buildings

not required by the Fighting Services in the Geraldton district. The hon. member suggested that unused Air Force huts at Geraldton would be suitable for this purpose, and implied that nothing in this regard had been done by the Government. The Workers' Homes Board has this matter in hand. The secretary of the board has personally conducted investigations at Geraldton and is now awaiting advice as to when the huts which are being processed for disposal will be available. It is thought that this will be in about a month's time. Some time ago the Town Clerk at Geraldton called for applications from persons desirous of occupying the huts as temporary homes, but in view of the very poor response, the huts being situated at the aerodrome, which is some miles out of Geraldton, it was considered preferable to concentrate on the erection of new homes rather than to endeavour to force people to live at the aerodrome.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: That is so. It was thought the material contained in the huts might be made available.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Wood and Mr. Parker discussed problems relating to transport. Mr. Wood mentioned that last winter a number of tractors were immobilised for short periods owing to the demand for oil fuel being greater than the railways could handle expeditiously. The hon. member's assertion that farmers were forced to approach their parliamentary representatives before they could obtain fuel supplies is an exaggeration. In several instances members of Parliament did make representations, but the position was already receiving the attention of the Transport Board which was working in close collaboration with Pool Petroleum Proprietary Limited. The hon. member may rest assured that officers of the Transport Board gave their most earnest attention to the problem of fuel supplies while it lasted, and they were constantly being called upon both during and after office hours.

Hon. G. B. Wood: I said that. I did not condemn the Transport Board at all. I asked why this position should have to arise.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am not suggesting the hon. member blamed the Transport Board, but he did say that members of Parliament had to take the matter up before the Transport Board moved.

Hon. G. B. Wood: That is quite true, too.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am pointing out that that is an exaggeration.

Hon. G. B. Wood: I differ.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Altogether 378 permits have been granted this year, representing the carriage of 11,822 drums of tractor fuel by road. Many country centres as far distant as Moora, Miling, Wubin, Koorda, Mukinbudin, Kununoppin, Baandee, Muntadgin, Hyden, Lake Grace, Ongerup and Tambellup have received their supplies in this manner. The urgent demand caused by the war for increasing food production and the necessity for the re-establishment of returned Servicemen created an unprecedented demand for fuel at a time when other essential industries were placing an abnormal burden on the railway facilities. It is most unlikely that the combination of circumstances will arise again, at least not within a prophesiable time. No responsibility devolves upon the Transport Board in these matters unless existing services cannot cope with the work offering. Notwithstanding this, the board has already arranged to review the fuel supply position early next year to ensure that there will be no delays or difficulties in 1947, and will take whatever action is necessary to see that there is no shortage of fuel in the country through lack of adequate transport.

Criticism has been levelled by several members at the deficit for the past financial year of £912,559, and at the necessity for the State Government to make further approaches to the Grants Commission. This is a position that to a great extent has been brought about by the Commonwealth Government's policy of economic stabilisation. The fact is that all the State's revenues were pegged; that is to say, the charges made by the Railway Department and other public utilities could not be increased during the war, despite the substantial rise in costs. Where private firms were subsidised by the Commonwealth Government in order to prevent a further increase in their selling prices, the State Governments were not able to enjoy the benefit of the pegged selling price, and where Government departments had to buy from a merchant whose prices were kept down by payment of a subsidy from the Commonwealth Government, these departments had to pay the full price which the merchant would have charged had he not been receiving the subsidy.

The Commonwealth Government recognises that where, as a result of its policy of economic stabilisation, a State finds itself in financial difficulties, then the Commonwealth is under an obligation to recompense that State. It appears inevitable that until economic stability can be achieved without the aid of Commonwealth subsidies, Western Australia will have to depend on the Commonwealth Government for increased grants. There is no reason why the States should reduce their efforts merely to save the Commonwealth Government expense which that Government recognises is its legitimate responsibility. The references in the Speech of His Excellency to proposed expenditure on several large projects met with a measure of scorn from several members, notwithstanding that these works are highly essential if this State is to continue to be developed. The Government would be failing in its duty if it made no effort to provide what it considers necessary for the fullest development of the State.

Reference to matters relating to the railways was made by Mr. E. H. H. Hall and Mr. Bennetts. Mr. Hall was worried as to whether the statutory inspections of the Midland Railway Company's line were being carried out by the Commissioner of Railways. I am glad to inform the hon. member that these have not been overlooked. A detailed inspection of the permanent way was made by a departmental inspector during February, 1945, and the bridges, culverts and structures were given attention the following month. A general inspection by the District Engineer, Perth, was carried out in April, 1945, and in March this year the Commissioner, accompanied by the Deputy Chief Civil Engineer, conducted an inspection of the line.

During his thoughtful maiden speech, Mr. Bennetts made some interesting comment on the railways, a subject on which he can speak with some authority for, as he has told us, he has had 35 years' experience as a railwayman. While it must be admitted that the running time from Kalgoorlie to Perth is substantially the same as it was 35 years ago—the actual difference being 40 minutes—it must be taken into consideration that the maximum load of the train is now greater by 45 tons and that the population since 1910 has spread out along the line between Kalgoorlie and Merredin, neces-

sitating many more stops than there used to be. The hon. member suggested that the use of a Diesel train would shorten the running time, but I am informed by the Railway Department that, apart from the fact that it has no Diesel available, steam trains are considered more suitable for the Perth-Kalgoorlie route. Mr. Bennetts stated that better facilities should be provided on this line for second-class passengers, and mentioned that the open type of carriage, which is sometimes used, results in unpleasant and draughty travelling. The department fully realises the unsuitability of open coaches for long journeys, and uses them only when it is unavoidable.

Reference to the possibility of installing heating systems in trains was also made by Mr. Bennetts. This is an amenity that has received consideration from time to time but has not been adopted, mainly owing to the great expense that would be involved and to the fact that, generally, the climatic conditions in this State do not warrant such a provision. Mr. Bennetts complained that hot water was not available on the trains, but I am informed that the conductor on the Kalgoorlie express will provide it on request. Mr. Bennetts stated that to his knowledge on one occasion recently there was not sufficient food on the Kalgoorlie train for the second-class passengers.

The Railway Department is most concerned about this, as all dining cars are required to carry reserve stocks in addition to the actual requirements of the trip. If the hon. member will supply details of the case he referred to, the department will investigate the matter. Mr. Bennetts also stated that he has received many requests for the provision of Diesel coaches on the Esperance-Kalgoorlie line. I am afraid that this is out of the question at the present time, as all the available plant of this nature is in full use. However, when the new Diesel trains now on order are received, the claims of the Esperance line will receive the fullest consideration. Of course Mr. Bennetts will realise that other districts also consider that they possess unrivalled claims for Diesel trains to be placed in operation on their lines, and that the Railway Department will not be able to meet every request.

In their speeches Mr. Welsh and Mr. Forrest drew attention to a number of matters affecting their vast province and, as the development of the North is a matter to which Parliament and the Government have recently devoted a great deal of consideration, I propose to deal rather thoroughly with the subject. Mr. Welsh mentioned the lack of passenger shipping accommodation and the missing by ships of the tides at Port Hedland and Broome. He regretted that the new vessel placed on the service lacked accommodation for passengers. This condition was, however, unavoidable. When the Government approached the Directorate of Shipping for a passenger vessel to replace the m.v. "Koolama," it was advised that this could not be done for at least three years. A proposal to modify one of the "D" Class vessels to enable her to carry 12 passengers was then discussed, but this ship could not be made available prior to April, 1947. The need for tonnage to cope with cargo requirements was most urgent, and waiting until 1947 was out of the question.

In view of this cargo problem it was decided to accept the s.s. "Dorrigo" which had no passenger room, this vessel being made available until such time as more suitable tonnage can be procured. In the meantime two passenger vessels of the Blue Funnel Line are calling at coastal ports on their southward voyages from Singapore. So far as the disadvantages of the tidal nature of some of the North-West ports are concerned, schedules are arranged which enable vessels to arrive at the tidal ports on spring tides, but there are occasions when unforeseen circumstances arise to delay a vessel and cause her to miss the tides. However, it is anticipated that when normal running conditions are restored, regular fortnightly northward sailings will be maintained.

Reference was made by Mr. Welsh to the fact that the aeroplane service to Onslow and Roebourne required improvement and that this could be achieved by extension of the landing grounds at these centres. A few months ago the company operating this service approached the Civil Aviation Department with a request that these two aerodromes be extended in order that larger planes could be accommodated. I understand, however, that the aerodrome at Roebourne cannot be extended and that another site is necessary. At Onslow one runway is long enough, but this of course can be

used only when the wind is in a certain direction. I am informed that the plane service to these two towns will be augmented shortly. An additional Lockheed trip is to operate each week from Perth to Port Hedland and will commence tomorrow, the 22nd August. The Government is encouraging the extension of aerial transport services in the North. Special provision is being made for the carriage by air of fresh vegetables, and it is hoped in this manner to transport to the metropolitan market out-of-season vegetables grown at Carnarvon.

In the course of his remarks Mr. Forrest mentioned the lack of good roads in the North-West, a fact which the Government proposes to remedy by the utilisation of modern heavy roadmaking machinery with a view to the construction of a main road system throughout the North-West. Mr. Forrest, in eulogising the assistance given to residents of the North-West by the Flying Doctor Service, emphasised the necessity of each town in the North having its own doctor. He pointed out that Onslow, Roebourne and Port Hedland do not possess this amenity. The Government is in full agreement with Mr. Forrest and is doing its utmost to extend the present medical service in the North. There is a salaried position for a doctor available at each of the towns referred to by the hon. member, and the Medical Department has advertised extensively for doctors to fill the vacant positions, the salaries of which are £1,060 annually. The Department is hopeful that appointments to these positions will not be unduly delayed.

In regard to water supplies—another matter which interested Mr. Forrest—the committee appointed to report on the development of the North-West has recommended to the Government that a satisfactory drinkable water supply be provided for each North-West town, and that special attention be given to Port Hedland. The Government is giving attention to the provision of water supplies on the main stock routes and also to the assistance of landholders in developing water supplies. It was hoped by the hon. member that a survey would be conducted of the Gascoyne River with a view to ascertaining irrigation possibilities. The Government has already taken steps to locate reliable water supplies for irrigation purposes which will enable additional settlement in the Gascoyne River

area. It is hoped that this centre can be developed as the focal point for the distribution of tropical fruits and vegetables throughout the North-West, and also for the production of early vegetables for sale on the metropolitan winter market.

It was stated by Mr. Forrest that the pearling industry deserved every encouragement the Government could give it. A considerable amount of consideration has been given to the re-establishment of this industry, and some little time ago the Government appointed a committee of experienced pearlers and departmental officers, and that committee was asked to submit recommendations for the rehabilitation of pearling. In addition, the Commonwealth Government asked the Northern Australian Development Committee to submit a report on the subject. Later on a conference was held in Melbourne at which representatives of Western Australia were present.

The rehabilitation of the industry is dependent on the twin factors of labour and boats. In regard to labour, it is impossible under existing working conditions to carry on without the utilisation of imported Asiatic labour. Up to the present the Commonwealth Government has not viewed with favour the bringing into this country of this type of labour, but recommendations have now gone forward from both the State Government and the Melbourne conference that the importation of Asiatics be approved, even if only for a limited period, to permit of the institution of a scheme of training to enable Australians to take the place of the Asiatic labour. It is probable that this matter will be discussed at the Premiers' Conference, when it is hoped that it will be finalised. Boats suitable for the industry are at present practically unobtainable. Of the pre-war fleet of upwards of 50 luggers, impressed by the Navy when Japan came into the war, very few now remain. Eight or nine have been purchased by pearlers from the Disposals Commission and seven are in commission. Some time will elapse before boatbuilders can meet the requirements of the pearlers.

It can be realised from what I have said that the development of the North-West is receiving close attention from the Government. The North-West Development Committee gave considerable time and thought to the problem, and made a large number of recommendations to the Government.

Apart from the items I have mentioned, other matters to which the Government has given attention with a view to increasing the amenities of the existing population and making possible the further development of the North-West include the reduction of State shipping freight rates to the 1925 basis, this resulting in a reduction of 15 per cent. on the rates applying at the beginning of this year. It is also intended to reduce similarly the passenger rates. The price of petrol is to be reduced, so that the price at all North-West ports shall be the same as at Geraldton.

If a Government school is not within five miles of the home, parents will be subsidised to allow their children to be maintained away from home in order to attend school. Travelling teaching instructors are being appointed to assist parents in the use of correspondence lesson papers and other educational facilities. In conjunction with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, the Government has established a research station in the Port Hedland district with a view to—

- (a) improving the standard of sheep;
- (b) combating the blowfly pest;
- (c) tackling the dingo and kangaroo pests;
- (d) studying native flora;
- (e) studying other relevant problems.

Consideration is being given to the improvement of stock. Most of the pre-war medical services have been re-established and much thought is being applied to the betterment of these services. Ways and means, such as special reductions in taxation, are being considered in order that employment in the North-West can be made more attractive. Considerable expenditure is being incurred in reconditioning all wharves and jetties in the ports, and cool storage facilities are to be put into operation and subsidised at each port.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY:** There are one or two other matters associated with the North-West to which I would like to refer. More particularly would I mention the fact that a hydrographic survey of the coast in that part of the State is receiving attention. Arrangements have been made for the survey by the R.A.N. survey vessel "Lachlan," of King Sound with a view to establishing the best site for a deep sea

port in the vicinity of Derby, so that if at a later date it is proposed to establish a meatworks at that town, the location may be decided on with a full knowledge of local conditions. I understand that a survey of portion, if not all, of the length of Cambridge Gulf was made a few months ago, and particulars of this have been requested.

Members who have perused the fifth-year review of the Pastoral Industry Debt Adjustment Advisory Committee will have realised the extensive assistance that pastoralists have received both from the Crown and from secured creditors. The pastoralists who came under the scheme obtained a total amount of relief from secured debts amounting to £609,342, which included £99,826 as land rent remitted on the recommendation of the Pastoral Appraisal Board. From the stations whose owners enjoyed this relief, wool to the value of £515,540 has been produced. The greatest success of the scheme, however, was the retention of the great majority of experienced pastoralists on their stations despite the longest drought in the history of the State. Thus it will be seen that the Government is not only anxious to improve conditions in the North-West but has already taken steps in several directions that must necessarily be in the interests of those living in the far North.

Some information was desired by Mr. Fraser regarding the building of a new bridge at Fremantle. This is a project which is dependent upon the rate of increase of trade at the port of Fremantle. In order that the Government may have its plans prepared, it has engaged a highly qualified harbours engineer in a consulting capacity to carry out a detailed investigation and survey of the Fremantle area, with a view to preparing plans and estimates covering the stage-by-stage future development of the harbour. This report will contain recommendations regarding both the most suitable site for a dock and the location of a new bridge, which will have to be constructed before the existing railway bridge is demolished.

Among several matters referred to by Mr. W. R. Hall was that of payments made from the Mine Workers' Relief Fund, and he stated that the amounts require to be increased. Members may be interested to know that although the fund has a sub-



stantial balance in hand, there is also a very considerable contingent liability. In recent years the fund has been examined by the ex-Government Actuary, the late Mr. Bennett, and by the present Government Actuary whose services are made available by the Victorian Government when required. Both these gentlemen have stated conclusively that the present rates of payment should not be increased. I understand that the board administering the fund, which comprises two representatives of the employers, two of the employees, with a Government nominee as chairman, are also unanimous on the matter of payments. The Government has not been idle in its efforts to improve the circumstances of the unfortunate people who are forced to accept payments from the fund and has strenuously endeavoured to have the relief payments exempted from the provisions of the Old Age and Invalid Pensions Acts. If this were done, the recipients would benefit considerably, but the Commonwealth Government so far has not seen fit to agree.

The inadequate accommodation and shortage of staff of the Lands Titles Office were mentioned by both Mr. Fraser and Mr. Parker. The staff question is being overcome with the return from active service of experienced officers. The problem of providing suitable accommodation has not been overlooked. The inevitability of congestion at busy times will be apparent when it is realised that for the financial year just ended, the revenue of the Titles Office was 30 per cent. above what is regarded as that of a normal year, and for the three months ended July, 1946, the revenue was almost 80 per cent. above normal. This is, of course, a corollary of the return to peacetime conditions and must be expected to continue for some time. I am informed that the staff of the Titles Office appreciate the hon. members' complimentary remarks concerning them, and that they will continue to do their utmost to meet the requirements of the public, notwithstanding the many inconveniences that have to be put up with.

Several members took the opportunity to ventilate grievances with respect to the native question. This is a problem the intricacies of which are not confined to Western Australia but are of Australia-wide proportions. As Mr. Simpson pointed out, it might

be expected that the Commonwealth Government would take a more extensive interest in the matter. It, however, does not seem disposed to do so, and only recently rejected this State's suggestion that a grant of £50,000 per year for three years be made available in order that Western Australia work on behalf of the natives might be increased. The reason provided for the refusal was the extent of the Commonwealth's post-war obligations. However, I understand that the Commonwealth intends shortly to convene a conference on native welfare, and it may be that some satisfactory arrangement can then be made in regard to the financial aspect.

The suggestion by Mr. Simpson that the policy of the Department of Native Affairs encourages infiltration by natives into town is untenable. This infiltration has been brought about by the payment of Commonwealth social benefits providing the native with an opportunity to obtain improved living conditions, and because of requests from the Railway Department that half-castes be employed as fettlers in the absence on war service of permanent employees. The Department of Native Affairs agreed to this reasonable request, and as a result railway services were able to be maintained. I am greatly afraid that many so-called grievances are built up on a basis of racial dislike and discrimination, a policy which the Government does not regard with favour.

A complaint that the payment of child endowment was having an adverse effect upon many native families, was voiced by Mr. Wood. He asserted that this addition to their incomes was encouraging the natives to lead lazy lives and that it was quite possible that some of the money, far from helping to maintain children, was being used in gambling. The hon. member must be assured that if he can furnish the Department of Native Affairs with specific particulars of any instances in which able-bodied natives are not working but are living on child endowment money, then prompt action will be taken by the department to cancel the cash payments and make arrangements for the issue of orders for foodstuffs instead.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Is there any chance of the payments being handed to the State to deal with instead of to individual natives?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is done in some instances. The Department of Na-

live Affairs is fully conversant with the position so far as natives are concerned. Two officers watch the position and closely supervise the payment of child endowment through the services of the local protectors of natives.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: They will never stop them.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Departmental inquiries have revealed that the majority of detribalised parents are spending their child endowment money in a sensible manner on the welfare of their children. Reports concerning the misapplication of child endowment money are few, but when any are received, prompt action is taken to arrange for the issue in lieu by local police officers of orders for foodstuffs and goods. It can therefore be seen that a satisfactory safeguard exists, as is desired by Mr. Wood. It is not considered that that hon. member's suggestion that payments be arranged through local committees would be successful, and I am afraid that there would be a considerable outcry if child endowment payments were withheld from deserving native parents and paid to a common fund.

Attention was drawn by Mr. Wood to what he termed the appalling condition of native habitations in the York district, and he wondered whether they were ever inspected by a departmental officer. I understand that the earnings of the natives around York are quite good, and comparable with the rates paid to white workers. The natives should therefore be in a position to provide themselves with satisfactory camps. I assure the hon member that the camps are inspected as frequently as possible, but if his remarks can be substantiated, it appears that action will have to be taken to make an example of the offenders by removing them to settlements.

Hon. G. B. Wood: I can easily prove the statements I made.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am not suggesting that the hon. member did not state what he knows to be true, but that the facts stated by him are not known to the department.

Instances of delays that had occurred in the return to their owners of mining machinery loaned to the Commonwealth Government for war purposes were quoted by Mr. Simpson who laid stress on the fact that the

equipment owned by the Reedys mine was still in the possession of the Commonwealth. He also stated that the non-return of this plant was delaying the placing in employment by the mine of a large number of men. These facts cannot be contraverted, and the State Government is well aware of the position. The necessity of loaning mining equipment for furthering the war effort is undeniable, as is also the obligation for its return when no longer required for that purpose. The State Government has made, and is making, every effort to ensure the earliest possible return of the machinery, and has been primarily responsible for the success of the negotiations to date, a fact to which mining companies can bear witness.

As a result of the State Government's effort, much machinery, including that of the Big Bell mine, has now been returned to Western Australia, and negotiations for the return of other items are gradually meeting with success. So far as the Reedys mine is concerned, I might mention that delay in the resumption of its operations is not solely due to the absence of its plant. The State Government has sponsored an application by the company to the Commonwealth Government for financial assistance, and I am glad to say was very recently informed that the Commonwealth is prepared to help. It should not be long now before this mine will re-employ the remainder of its workmen, when the huts referred to by Mr. Simpson will be occupied.

Then again, Mr. Wood was perturbed about the state of country roads and the ability of local governing authorities to carry out necessary and overdue repairs without the aid of heavy equipment, which he stated would be beyond the means of most road boards. He may be aware that all local authorities have been circularised by the Main Roads Department in order that some idea might be obtained of the mechanical equipment required by them. When supplied with this information the department will be in a position to advise the local authorities should types of heavy equipment that may interest them be made available for disposal by the Allied Works Council. Many local authorities have advised the department of their requirements in this regard. The Main Roads Board has no money available to finance the purchase of plant for local authorities, and there is no provision for such assistance as this under the

Federal Aid Roads Agreement. Certain items of equipment will be available to local authorities at the prices paid by governmental and semi-governmental bodies.

Concern was expressed by Mr. W. R. Hall about what he termed the deplorable condition of the Great Eastern Highway from the end of the bitumen surface as far as Coolgardie, and he stated it was imperative that the road be bituminised to Coolgardie. The highway is a declared main road from the boundary of the City of Perth to Southern Cross, and, as Mr. Hall mentioned, it has been constructed and surfaced with bitumen as far as the No. 5 Pumping Station at Carrabin. The only section of the road, therefore, which comes within the jurisdiction of the Main Roads Department and is not bituminised, is the 36 miles from Carrabin to Southern Cross. It was anticipated that the bitumen road would extend to Southern Cross by December, 1942, but the war prevented this and subsequently it has not been possible to do other than minor maintenance work. However, it is anticipated that work will be resumed on the road within the next two months.

The 140 miles of road from Southern Cross to Coolgardie is not a declared main road, and the responsibility for its maintenance is that of the Yilgarn and Coolgardie Road Boards, which have done little or no work on the road in the past few years. The Main Roads Department has made funds available annually for maintenance and minor repair work and during the past twelve months has constantly maintained a power grader and motor truck on the road. A great deal of the road from Carrabin requires construction work, and even when men and plant are available it will be a big problem to carry out extensive improvements to approximately 180 miles of road where weather conditions are severe and construction materials are relatively poor in quality. The expenditure of £30,000 had been authorised previously for construction work on the road, and work will recommence immediately plant and manpower are available. In the meantime, maintenance of the road will be continued.

I think I have succeeded in replying to the more important matters mentioned by members during this debate. As I emphasised earlier in my speech, I could not deal with every point that was raised, but if

there is any matter that a member referred to and feels that he would like further information upon, then, in accordance with my usual practice, I shall be only too happy to oblige him with whatever details are available.

Question put and passed; the Address adopted.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, resolved: That the Address be presented to His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor by the President and such members as may desire to accompany him.

## BILL—MEDICAL ACT AMENDMENT

Received from the Assembly and read first time.

## ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 3rd September.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 7.53 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

*Wednesday, 21st August, 1946.*

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 p.m. and read prayers.