

sent, we shall have no hope of getting new industries established.

On motion by Hon. J. A. Dimmitt, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 6.12 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Thursday, 17th August, 1939.*

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

### QUESTION—RAILWAYS, SLEEPER CONTRACTS AND INSURANCE.

Mr. HOLMAN asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Will he supply—(a) the names of the contractors, (b) the quantities, in connection with contracts entered into with the Railway Department, for the supply of jarrah and/or wandoo sleepers since 1st October, 1938? 2, Can he say whether the persons engaged in the production of such sleepers were covered for workers' compensation? 3, If not, is it the policy of the Government to obtain its supplies of hewn sleepers through individuals who are prepared to engage in this dangerous work without insurance cover? 4, Can he state that, in any future contracts, measures will be taken to ensure that all persons engaged in the fulfilment of such contracts shall be covered for workers' insurance in a similar manner to those engaged in respect of private timber merchants?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1 (a) and (b), Hewn wandoo sleepers: Bailey Bros., 1,270; D. O'Connell, junr., 1,829; F. Thompson, 1,000; G. Viner, 2,000;

M. J. Roach, 2,000; E. Reilly and G. Morris, 4,000; F. Weeks & Co., 10,000; A. Shalders, 10,000; J. H. Bennett & Sons, 3,500; F. J. Chapman, 1,143; H. T. Jones, 2,000; H. O. Lloyd, 500; B. Menghini, 2,000; W. P. Scott, 500; L. J. Squires, 1,524; Adelaide Timber Co., 2,150; Millars' Timber and Trading Co., 10,550; F. Ricetti, 250; J. Lawrence and A. Bagley, 3,550; A. Ferrari, 1,000; Worsley Timber Co., 2,540; E. S. Petchell, 1,500; M. Bakotin, 1,500; M. Biocic, 1,500. Sawn wandoo sleepers: Bailey Bros., 1,270; M. M. Hughes & Sons, 3,000; Bunning Bros., 50,000; Adelaide Timber Co., 130; Wandoo & Jarrah, Ltd., 1,500; Coli Sawmills, 25,400; R. Stewart, 1,000; Johnston Bros., 12,700; Shields Bros., 2,540; Millars' Timber & Trading Co., 15,000. Hewn jarrah sleepers: Bailey Bros., 1,270; R. T. Hebb, 3,000; K. A. Larson, 2,000; R. Masters, 889; J. H. Bennett & Sons, 2,000; M. J. Roach, 1,000; F. Weeks & Co., 3,000; Adelaide Timber Co., 580; F. Ricetti, 380; N. G. Johns, 150; Millars' Timber & Trading Co., 2,500; Worsley Timber Co., 630; M. D. Pernich, 500; H. T. Jones, 20; J. Galvin, 1,770. 2, As a condition of contract insurance policy must be submitted where labour is employed. 3 and 4, Answered by No. 2.

### LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Wilson, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Hon. W. D. Johnson (Guildford-Midland) on the ground of urgent private business.

### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

*Seventh Day.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands) [4.36]: If reiteration of the matter is not boring to you, Mr. Speaker, I should like to join with other members in congratulating you upon your elevation to the high position you hold, the highest the House can confer upon any member. I feel sure that during your occupancy of the office you will preserve the dignity of the House, the rights of members, and all the great traditions associated with your ancient office. My congratulations are also offered to the member for Marchison (Mr. Marshall) upon his induction to the Chairmanship of Com-

mittees. From his very learned knowledge of the Rules and Orders of the House, of which he has given us an example already, I feel sure he will carry out his duties with credit to himself and satisfaction to members. I should like to congratulate, too, the member for Kanowna (Hon. E. Nulsen) and the member for Kimberley (Hon. A. A. M. Coverley) upon their elevation to Ministerial office. Again, I feel sure they will both devote all their energies and abilities to the discharge of their onerous duties. Lastly I would welcome to our midst those new members who came here as a result of the last general election. They will find that despite party differences there is a warm feeling of friendship between members of the House, and that warm feeling goes a long way to tone down the bitterness that sometimes creeps into our political discussions.

There are many outside the House and some in it who look upon the debate on the Address-in-reply as being somewhat a waste of time. I do not share that view. On the contrary I hold that this is an occasion when the grievances of the subject may be properly and adequately aired. We must remember that in other Parliaments grievances can be discussed at any time on the motion for the adjournment of the House.

The Premier: And they generally are.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Yes. Under our practice, the discussion of grievances is confined to the present debate, to the general discussion on the Estimates and on a Supply Bill. Members will agree, therefore, that it is important to retain this privilege for the purpose of airing, and giving proper consideration to, the grievances of any subject of this State. Naturally, owing to distance from the seat of government and to the fact that they are seldom heard of and even more seldom given attention to, grievances from residents in country electorates prevail in the course of the Address-in-reply debate. But it must be remembered that residents of metropolitan constituencies are by no means devoid of complaints, despite which I shall begin on a note of praise. The affairs of the Old Men's Home at Dalkeith, which is in my electorate, have improved immensely during the last six months. Indeed, the only urgent matter that is now put forward for attention there is the reconditioning of the kitchen, involv-

ing particularly the supply of what I might refer to as a respectable boiler.

The Minister for Health: We are going into that matter now.

Hon. N. KEENAN: To all appearances the present boiler is most disreputable. There are about 550 inmates at the Old Men's Home, but not all are old age pensioners. Those who are pay 14s. a week for their board and lodging. If the State paid an equal amount for the non-pensioners sent to the home, the institution would be in receipt of an annual income of over £20,000 a year. Of course, the State does not pay 14s. a week for those inmates who are sent to the Old Men's Home and therefore the pensioners are to an extent paying some proportion towards the upkeep of the non-pensioners, and the State provides the balance. As a result of that policy, the institution is always on the very verge of financial straits. Nevertheless, the whole atmosphere at that institution has changed in a most marvellous manner during the last six months, and I congratulate the Superintendent and the Minister who was responsible for selecting the Superintendent for appointment, on this very happy result.

Now I turn to call attention once more to the much-neglected Nedlands State school. Despite the expenditure by the Nedlands Parents and Citizens' Association of over £700 on the school buildings and grounds, the small item of gravelling the playground, which has been so often asked for and so often promised, still remains unattended to. True, a small quantity of what was described as gravel was put down over 12 months ago, but it was mainly sand. At any rate, whatever it was, the material has been washed away by the winter rains and to-day there are dangerous gulleys traversing the playground. Moreover, the school premises are still inadequate for the attendance. This shortage of accommodation is likely to be accentuated in the future because Nedlands is essentially a suburb where young newly-married people select their homes. During the present winter, premises were hired apart from the school buildings, in order to accommodate the surplus attendance. Before that was done—and it is not a course that one would recommend, seeing that it involved the use of a separate building, on the other side of the road, for school purposes—50 children were taught on the ver-

andah of the school in all kinds of weather.

The Premier: You are aware that two new schools have been provided in that locality in the last four years.

Hon. N. KEENAN: That does not alter the fact.

The Premier: Yes, it does.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Does the Premier know what the increase in population has been during the past two years?

The Premier: Yes.

Hon. N. KEENAN: If the Premier knows of that increase, he must appreciate that it does not alter the facts at all.

The Premier: Of course it affects the position.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The world is progressing, and Nedlands, in keeping with that tendency, has progressed to a marked degree. Of course, what is good enough to-day may not be good enough to-morrow, and certainly what was good enough two years ago is absurd in the light of the requirements of to-day. A suggestion has been advanced by the Dalkeith Parents and Citizens' Association with the object of relieving the overcrowding of the Nedlands school. The association suggested that an additional room should be added to the school at Dalkeith and that institution raised to the third standard. That would mean that children attending the Dalkeith school would continue there for at least a year longer and so relieve the pressure on the Nedlands school. The suggestion has also the recommendation for it that the parents of all the children attending the Dalkeith school live in the immediate neighbourhood and, therefore, the children would be spared the necessity for a considerable walk when they left the Dalkeith school to attend the school at Nedlands. They would also be saved the perils, which are considerable, associated with crossing the main public highway through the district.

Mr. Marshall: I will say that is true.

The Premier: Yes, I admit "peril" is the word to apply to that thoroughfare.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I do not propose to change that word. On the ground of expense involved, it cannot be claimed to be any more costly to add one room to the Dalkeith school than it is to hire a hall to house the overflow of the Nedlands school.

There is another matter in respect of which residents of Nedlands feel aggrieved,

and that refers to transportation. It is impossible for those living in the closely-settled district of Hollywood, which is now known as North Nedlands, to secure transport to and from Perth.

Mr. Needham: They want more trolley buses.

Hon. N. KEENAN: If they go down Stirling Highway, which is a very considerable walk, to travel by trolley bus, they find those buses full at all peak hours. The result is that they are left stranded without any means whatever of getting to Perth. To travel by the present slow, noisy and infrequent tram service is all but out of the question. What the residents require is a bus service running down from Loch street parallel to Stirling Highway, at a distance of about half a mile or a little more north of that highway, through the centre of North Nedlands to Hampden road and thence into Perth via Thomas street and King's Park road or via the Riverside drive. I am told there will be no difficulty in securing that service from private enterprise if the Transport Co-ordination Board gives its consent. In speaking of that board and of all those boards that now surround us and interfere with almost every activity of our lives and govern us in such a way that we do not seem to have any personal freedom, I would say that to me it is a matter of great regret that this House has been so ready in the past to divest itself of authority and responsibility by the creation of such bodies. Recently I had a distressing experience of one of these boards. It was the case of a worker who had been in the employ of the board for 25 years, and had lost his health entirely as the result of that employment. Though it seems scarcely credible, it is nevertheless a fact that this faithful servant was thrown out without an atom of compensation, and was not even given long service leave. I interviewed the Minister nominally administering the Act, and he was most sympathetic. I wish to make that fact clear. But he could do nothing.

Mr. Styants: To which board are you referring?

Hon. N. KEENAN: I do not desire to mention the name of the board concerned.

Mr. Fox: What would private enterprise do in a case like that?

Hon. N. KEENAN: Private enterprise is not given such powers and if the gentleman

who interrupted me would examine the authority possessed by these boards he would soon discover that fact.

Mr. Styants: Most boards are subject to the jurisdiction of a Minister.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Suppose a private employer had been guilty of conduct of this character. Suppose he took the course of dismissing an employee after the man had given 25 years' service and was no longer able to carry out his duties because of ill-health due to the nature of his work. What opprobrium would such an employer deserve and receive! Yet here was a board with ample monetary resources to meet all obligations—and not in one sense, in my opinion, meeting them—acting in the manner I have indicated! And there is no power in the Ministry or in this House to bring the board to book. I want to emphasise that this should be a warning to the House to cease the nefarious practice of handing over its powers and responsibilities to these autocratic bodies. I could wish that the member for Guildford-Midland (Hon. W. D. Johnson) was amongst us so that he might ventilate his well known views on that matter.

I now turn away from circumstances associated with my own constituency to the wider arena of the State at large. I noticed in an article entitled "The Voice of Labour"—one of a series which appears weekly in the "Daily News," and which, I understand, is written by a prominent official of the Trades Hall—that a claim was made that the present Government was returned with certain mandates. It is perfectly true that the Premier, when making his policy speech—and I presume also on other occasions—asked for certain mandates. He was not in the least shy about asking for them. I was listening-in on the occasion of his speech, and although the particular instrument I was using was not working very well, I heard the word "mandate" mentioned again and again.

The Premier: There was no ambiguity about it, either.

Hon. N. KEENAN: That is true; there was no ambiguity, but there could be no more impudent assertion than to say that the electors gave the Premier any mandate.

The Premier: What did they do, then?

Hon. N. KEENAN: Let me point out to the Premier what they did. The

electors enrolled for the State number 265,987. The number that voted for the Labour Government's nominees for all the contested seats totalled 94,030. If members add to that—as they are bound to do—two-thirds of the net enrolment of electors in the electorates where Labour Government nominees were returned unopposed—namely 6,276—they will have a grand total of 100,306, out of a net enrolment of 265,987. How then, it may be asked, is it possible for this minority to have been returned to power? The answer is easy. This Government has been put in office by the Lilliputian electorates.

Mr. Cross: What?

Hon. N. KEENAN: Lilliputian electorates. If the hon. gentleman has not heard the word before, I shall be delighted to spell it for him. The total net enrolment for Kimberley, Pilbara, Roebourne and Gascoyne—the total net enrolment for those four electorates, all of which returned Government supporters—is only 3,669, less than one-third of the net enrolment for the constituency that I happen to represent. If, in fact, the theory of one-vote one-value were put into effect, there would be 13 representatives of Nedlands on the floor of this House.

Mr. Cross: Would you apply that principle to the Legislative Council?

Hon. N. KEENAN: There are the figures. Four Government supporters, including two Ministers, have been returned to this House, and the net enrolment for the whole four electorates they represent is less than one-third of the net enrolment of the Nedlands electorate. But that is not all. The grand total net enrolment for the State is 265,987, and, as we all know, there are 50 members in the Legislative Assembly. By the ordinary process of division, we find that the average number of electors for each constituency is 5,320. Nevertheless, the Labour Party—the Government party—holds 13 seats, half of its full strength on the floor of this House, through members representing constituencies the total net enrolment of which is only 36,809, or an average of 2,831 for each constituency, which is little more than half the average for the whole State.

The Minister for Mines: We go in for quality, not quantity.

Hon. N. KEENAN: There is the reason why the Government is seated on the Treasury benches.

Mr. Styants: Why quote only 13 seats? We have 27.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I could give a lot more figures, but I have taken 13 as being half.

Mr. Styants: You mentioned 13 because it suited your purpose.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The position would not be altered one iota by giving other figures. It is as clear as can be that the Government is sitting on the Treasury benches as representative of a minority. I suggest to members of the Government that they should be quite happy over the fact that they are sitting there, and should not indulge in any balderdash about having a mandate from the people. Let them be satisfied that they have got there, and not invite any inquiry as to how they did so. There is another side to the question of these small electorates, and a very alarming one. They present an irresistible temptation to what, for want of a better term, I may call the touring elector. I had intended to give some illustration of how this class of elector influenced results at the recent elections, but recognising the generous references made by the member for Pilbara (Mr. W. Hegney) to his predecessor in that seat, I do not wish to pursue the matter. That these electorates with only a few hundred voters on the roll plainly invite the attention of election-time visitors is a patent fact. The retort might be made that any person improperly on the roll will be discovered and struck off. It is safe to say, however, that for the one tourist who is discovered, many escape detection, and with these ridiculously small electorates, only a few have to escape detection to turn the scale and swamp the true local opinion.

The Premier: Do you object to remunerative employment being provided in those districts?

Hon. N. KEENAN: No: what I object to is the sudden increase of electors on the eve of an election.

Mr. Rodoreda: There was no sudden increase in the North-West electorates, not one.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. Rodoreda: The hon. member does not answer my statement.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The hon. member can make his speech later. I cannot submit to being side-tracked by stupid ideas.

Mr. Rodoreda interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. N. KEENAN: Now I propose to turn to the policy known as the drive to establish secondary industries in Western Australia. I noticed in the "West Australian" newspaper of the 10th August that the Minister for Industrial Development—I heard him addressed as the Minister for Employment, but whatever his correct title may be, I refer to the member for Northam—claimed that he had inaugurated the policy of establishing secondary industries in Western Australia.

The Minister for Labour: I claimed nothing of the sort.

The Premier: No, he did not make that claim.

Hon. N. KEENAN: If the Premier wishes to interrupt, will he be good enough to do so in a sufficiently loud voice so that I shall know what he is attempting to say? The Minister certainly claimed to have inaugurated this policy. In reply I have to tell the Minister that he is simply a gentle political plagiarist. Years before the Minister ever dreamed of establishing secondary industries in Western Australia—

Hon. C. G. Latham: Before he came here.

Hon. N. KEENAN: —the National Party had that policy in the forefront of its platform.

Mr. Withers: You did not give effect to it.

Hon. N. KEENAN: In fact, the Minister not only purloined this policy from the Nationalists, but went the whole hog and stole their arguments and reasons too.

The Minister for Mines: About the only thing worth stealing.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The Minister, however, made a hash of those grounds. The Nationalists, in speaking of our trade with the Eastern States, dealt with the net balance of trade. No one would complain if the East bought from us as much as we bought from the East, whatever the amount might be. The greater the amount, the better it would be. If we could sell £13,000,000 worth of goods to the East, by all means let the East sell £13,000,000 worth of goods to us. What the National Party brought to the notice of the people of this State was merely the excess of imports from the Eastern States over the exports from Western Australia to the Eastern States.

The Minister, when introducing in the last Parliament his Bill to establish a bureau of industry, spoke of the £13,000,000 of total purchases from the East and not of the £10,000,000 worth, the net figure, after allowing for our exports to the East. But it is a very small matter that the National Party first put forward this policy and first drew attention to the remarkable facts that illustrate it. What is a big matter and an important matter is that the Labour Party has now fallen into line and is prepared to support the drive to establish local industries. Therefore, in joining forces now to push the project to a successful issue, we can well forget any question as to who was the originator.

Let me remind members of the vital urgency that lies at the back of this proposal. In the year 1914 a Commission was appointed by the Federal Government, known as the Interstate Commission, to report inter alia on the industrial economy of Australia. As a result of extensive inquiries, the Commission found that the expansion of the pastoral and agricultural industries could be pursued indefinitely and that the world's demands for their products was practically unlimited. Armed with that authoritative statement, confirmed as it was by all that the then experience of the world appeared to teach us, it is little wonder that those in charge of the development of Western Australia, whether Labour or Nationalist, turned all their energies and all the resources at their command to develop the pastoral and agricultural industries. A large measure of success attended their efforts and, for the time being, all was well with the State.

But factors arose in the late twenties that entirely altered the outlook. To examine those factors in detail is unnecessary. Suffice it to say that from 1929 onwards the market for our exports of the products of those two great industries became seriously restricted. In a large measure we brought this catastrophe on ourselves. In those days Australia still had some fatuous belief in a one-way trade. Because the world had always bought the full measure of our exports, we thought it would go on doing so, even when we barred our door to imports from the outside world.

In the interests of the glass manufacturers of Australia, we barred the importation of glassware from Belgium, except

under a prohibitive tariff, and in the interests of other Australian secondary industries the importation of various lines from the then Republic of Germany and from France and Italy was also prohibited, except on payment of a very high tariff. Belgium and Germany up to 1930 were the principal buyers of the output of our Wyndham Meat Works; in fact, they absorbed 60 per cent. of the output. After the treatment meted out to them in 1930, they retaliated and placed an embargo on the output of our meat works. Since that time, Germany has never bought a pound of our meat. The same applies to France and Italy. Our exports to those countries of wool, wheat, sheepskins and hides were most adversely affected by the barriers erected in Australia against imports from those countries.

Thus the closing down of markets for our exports was by no means entirely due to the inauguration of a policy of self-sufficiency on the part of those countries, although this played an important part. Whatever ratio these causes bear to one another, the result was the loss of markets which, up to that time, had absorbed the ever-growing volume of exports in the products of these two industries. The effect was inevitable. Prices fell until, with the rising cost of production in Australia, they became unpayable. This was clearly to be discerned from 1932 onwards. It was then evident to the discerning mind that so far from any further expansion in the pastoral and agricultural industries being possible, a burning question would soon arise as to how to maintain their existing volume. The whole scheme for future development in this State, and indeed in Australia as a whole, had to be reconsidered and remodelled.

Particularly was this so in Western Australia since our national income rested in the main on the output of these two great exporting industries. Under those circumstances, in order to save the State, it remained only to swing over our thoughts and our energies to the hitherto almost untouched realm of secondary industry. That was why the National Party placed this policy in the front of its platform. That was why the party attempted, within the means in its power, to win support for this absolutely necessary policy if we were to save the State. Let us not be blind to the fact that enormous effort will be required to attain success. I repeat

that we welcome the fact that Labour has proposed what I say is approximately the policy that we espoused, and we will do everything in our power to assist the Minister to make a success of this vitally necessary policy. In the enormous field of our imports of all products of secondary industries from the Eastern States, we see a clear field in which to exploit this policy, but if we shut our eyes to realities, I am afraid we shall fail to achieve any large measure of success. There is a tendency, I fear, to rely far too much on sentimental appeals. There was a very great and highly distinguished countryman of mine who a great number of years ago appealed to the people of Ireland to burn everything that came over from England, except coal.

Mr. Marshall: The very thing they had to burn.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I would willingly to-morrow pray of the people of Western Australia not to burn in actual physical detail, but to neglect, and shut their eyes to, and refuse to deal in or purchase the goods that come from Eastern Australia. I would include—and I am sure I have the approval of the member for Collie (Mr. Wilson)—Eastern Australian coal. But Dean Swift had an ardent and burning patriotism to appeal to. Australian patriotism is Australia-wide. It is not subdivided among the different States. No one in Perth, for instance, would respond to an appeal not to buy a certain article because it happened to have been made in Brisbane. But anyhow, Dean Swift, although he had that ardent faith to appeal to, failed; and we too should fail in a much higher degree if we attempted to base our appeal on such a ground. Nor yet is it possible to achieve success by appealing to reason as apart from sentiment. No doubt if we bring it clearly before the minds of the people of this State that to buy goods of local manufacture is to a very considerable extent to serve their own interests and assure their own employment, we shall do much to win them to such a course. We shall bring them to a certain degree into agreement with us. But it seems to me that even when we do appeal to reason, it must be accompanied by two co-existing conditions. The goods of local manufacture which we ask the people of Western Australia to purchase must be of the same quality as the imported article—

Mr. Marshall: Or of a better quality.

Hon. N. KEENAN: —and the goods must be purchasable at the same, or almost the same, price.

Mr. Withers: And the supply must be equal to the demand also.

Hon. N. KEENAN: This means that the cost of manufacture in Western Australia must be approximately the same as that prevailing in other and competitive parts of Australia. I say "approximately" because the local manufacturer would have the advantage of not having to pay handling charges, freight, insurance, harbour dues and agency commission, and therefore the cost of manufacture in Western Australia can be higher and yet the article can be offered to the customer at approximately the same price as the imported article. If it would not be possible in fixing the cost of production in Western Australia to give full and complete consideration to the different cost of living in this State as compared with the cost of living in the competitive State in the East, then I am not, and those associated with me politically are not prepared to advocate the establishment of any secondary industry at the price this sacrifice would entail. One of the great benefits which we Secessionists looked to Secession to accomplish was that we would have control of our own Customs, and that we would be able to impose on all articles coming into Western Australia from outside Western Australia such Customs duties as we thought proper, and could thereby protect any conditions of local manufacture which we chose to enact. But Secession is, I fear, for the time being not practical politics.

How under the circumstances for which Federation is responsible it is possible to conduct manufacture in this State on a competitive basis with manufacture in the Eastern States without imposing an unfair sacrifice on workers engaged in such manufacture in this State is, I confess, a serious problem, in the solving of which all the brains of all the members of this House may be advantageously employed. I may not have won the assent of the House, but let me again impress on members that this policy must succeed if we are to save the State. The old policy has gone—the policy of developing the State on the basis of two great industries. If we cannot succeed in this new policy, what hope is there left for

this State of ours? Therefore I crave all the brains of every member of this Chamber to assist in finding a solution which will enable secondary industries to be established here on a competitive basis without inflicting any undue hardship on the workers of Western Australia who are called upon to work in those industries. I can assure the Minister that we who sit on these benches will gladly give him all the assistance we can, individually and as a party, in attempting to find a solution.

But there is yet another side to this question of the establishment of local secondary industries which I have, on occasions, strongly commented upon; and that is the necessity to protect them more especially in their infant stage from onslaughts by dumping. It would be fatuous on our part to imagine that there will be capital available from private sources in Western Australia sufficient to protect any such industry from an attack made by dumping. Nor do I know of any law or any statute that can be appealed to. Neither do I know of any power of the Federal Parliament or any State Parliament to interfere with what is known as the free intercourse of trade between the States. And let me say emphatically that the haunting fear of dumping is by no means an imaginary fear. We have had full experience of it in Western Australia whenever the establishment of a local industry seriously challenged a market up to then enjoyed by an Eastern States manufacturer. Of course in certain small lines and in certain restricted avenues of trade no hostility has been provoked in the past or will be provoked in the future. But now we are out, if we can do so, seriously to establish in Western Australia industries which would supply all the wants of the people of this State in the primary and secondary industries. We are out, if we can, to capture a trade that will run into £6,000,000 or £7,000,000 a year. Such a proposal Eastern States manufacturers are not likely to treat with contempt.

The Premier: There is a different atmosphere now in regard to the position of the States from that which we encountered a few years ago.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I suppose we all view things from a different aspect now, but I should like to see the altered Federal atmosphere in acts and not merely in words. After Munich, everyone thought there was

a better atmosphere in Europe so far as words went, but the facts were utterly different. And so it appears to me absolutely necessary that we should be prepared to support our new industries with a fund strong enough to make dumping ineffective. If the Eastern States manufacturer who desires to crush out of existence a local competitor in Western Australia knows that should he indulge in underselling such a competitor at a loss to himself this loss will be prohibitive by reason of the financial strength and protection standing behind such competitor in Western Australia, he will think twice before he commences a price war. And so it seems to me that only the existence of a large fund created by the State and controlled by the State and availed of as a protection against this threat of dumping will enable our new industries to get on a satisfactory footing and enable them to achieve any large measure of success in the principal lines of secondary industry.

On this occasion I do not desire to say anything more on this highly important subject, except once more to assure the House and the Minister that there is nothing in our power to do which we will not do to assist him in making a success of the policy. Nor do I wish to make any lengthy statement on the steps necessary to save the wheat-growing industry from the disaster impending over that industry. The Leader of the National Party laid down the policy of the Party in terms with which we are all in full accord, and in terms which I believe commend themselves to the approbation of the House at large. Moreover, the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Avon (Mr. Boyle) have very clearly set out the case for immediate consideration of the present state of the wheat-growing industry. If I wish at this stage to add anything to what has already been said, it is only this, that we should not be content with what is only a measure of temporary relief but, that, as has been so well stated by the Leader of the National Party, we should now and at once lay down and define a long-range policy to govern the future of the industry instead of being content with merely getting out by some means, hook or crook, from our present troubles. I may add, too, that that policy should embrace not merely the wheat-growing industry but all our large exporting industries—wool, even apples—

Mr. Marshall: Beef, too.



Hon. N. KEENAN: That forms part of the pastoral industry. I do not consider it advisable at this stage to make any comment on negotiations with the Federal authority. To do so, I believe, would be disastrous. I recognise that our Premier, as representing this State, has a very difficult role to fill, in view of the differences of opinion which exist in other States. I do not consider that I am venturing too far in putting forward as a reason the almost impossible attitude of one State in particular. But naturally all of us would be only too delighted if the Federal authority would accept full responsibility for finding money to give not only relief for the present emergency but sufficient to give us some sure and certain ground to stand on in the future. But in the meanwhile it would, in my opinion, be not only inopportune but perhaps highly damaging to attempt to lay down conditions or to discuss what it is that we should effect. We would have to leave the parleying to be done by the representatives of this State.

The Premier: A great deal would depend on the measure of control that the Government would have over production in the industry.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I do not think it advisable to discuss such points at present.

The Premier: No.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Before I resume my seat, I desire to congratulate the member for Mt. Magnet (Mr. Triat) on the very admirable speech he delivered in the course of this debate. In particular, I congratulate him on that part of his speech in which he stressed the necessity for all parties in this House to use their united wisdom in solving the problems confronting us. We have to face serious domestic problems, and to solve them we shall require all the help that we can obtain from those who are capable of assisting us. But, in addition, we cannot shake ourselves free from the terrible turmoil of the world at large. We are not merely passing through perilous days, but the outlook of escape from those perilous days is indeed obscure, if we can at all discover it amid the murk and blackness which looms ahead. It is essential, therefore, that we should minimise as far as possible the friction of individual views. I have the greatest respect for the member who has pointed out that it is well for us to act together for the public good. I, who know and sometimes

feel that I am an old man, thank this young man who has just come into our midst, for plainly showing us the line of conduct we should follow. I feel assured that we will follow that line of conduct and that each of us, in his own time and in his own way, will do his duty by the State we all love and all hope to serve.

MR. CROSS (Canning) [5.33]: I desire to congratulate you, Sir, on your elevation to the high office of Speaker, and I wish you a long and successful term.

Mr. Wilson: Hear, hear!

Mr. CROSS: I also congratulate the member who has been elected to the position of Chairman of Committees, and I extend my good wishes to those members who have risen to Ministerial rank. I desire to welcome the new members, who I hope will find that they are able to do something for the benefit of the State. I congratulate the member for Beverley (Mr. Mann) on his elevation to the front Opposition bench.

Member: Hear, hear!

Mr. CROSS: I express the wish that he will be of more service to his party there than he was when occupying the back bench.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You would not be missed much, anyhow.

Mr. CROSS: I propose to address myself to two subjects this evening, the wheat industry and the unemployment problem. These are the two most important matters with which we have to deal at present. During the past 20 or 30 years, world conditions have almost entirely changed. Thirty years ago, prominent men considered it would be impossible to produce enough wheat to meet the world's requirements; yet to-day we have a surplus. The trend in most countries of the world now is to make each country self-contained. So we have the trouble of finding markets. It is difficult at present to find a market for wheat at almost any price at all. This State's experience over a number of years is that wheat growing has never been very profitable.

Mr. Mann: Do not talk nonsense.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You do not know anything about the matter.

Mr. CROSS: For the past 30 years Governments have been besieged to render increasing assistance to the wheat industry.

Hon. C. G. Latham: From 1920 to 1928, wheat averaged 5s. 4d. a bushel.

Mr. CROSS: And from 1914 until the present time we have had an Industries Assistance Board which has been continuously assisting wheatgrowers. I do not know the total amount of the assistance given to the wheat industry of this State, nor do I think it much use to worry about the amount, because the farmers will never be able to repay it. In my opinion, the wheat problem is sufficiently acute for every person to try to find a solution. All Governments have been generous to the industry; and, in order that the industry might be extricated from its present position, I think the Government is prepared to extend that generosity. No Government, however, can upset the law of supply and demand. Even in the State itself the market for wheat is restricted. Thirty years ago farmers used horse-drawn vehicles; every wagon in the State was drawn by horses and every farmer cut a fair quantity of hay for his stock and horses, and fed a certain amount of grain to them. To-day, agricultural work is being performed by machinery driven with imported oils. The farmer no longer feeds horses with produce grown on his land.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Yet you want imported trolley buses for South Perth.

Mr. CROSS: One reason is because trolley buses could run on locally-produced fuel. Some members of the Opposition, because I cannot agree with their one-track idea in regard to the wheat industry, accuse me of being unsympathetic. That is not true.

Member: Of course not.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Of course it is.

Mr. CROSS: Those members cry out to-day for stabilisation.

Mr. Mann: Why did you leave the land?

Mr. CROSS: Because I considered farming did not pay.

Several members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. CROSS: The member for Beverley said last night that I did not know much about wheat growing.

Mr. Mann: You do not know much about anything.

Mr. CROSS: I gained some experience in the years from 1910 to 1914.

Mr. Mann interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Beverley must keep order.

Mr. CROSS: In 1914 I had the bitter experience of stripping about 650 acres of crop and at times to count almost every grain as it dropped into the box of the harvester. We had the worst drought ever experienced by the State in that year.

Mr. Mann: You do not look like it, anyway.

Mr. CROSS: I can assure members that I have a full measure of sympathy for the farmer. I went through the mill myself. I took up land at a time when settlers were not able to obtain much Government assistance. I had to cart water from Dumbleyung for about 30 miles; I was carting water for months until I was driven out, together with the other farmers in that district.

Mr. Mann: What were you driven out for?

Mr. CROSS: I know that practically the whole countryside where I was farming at that time is deserted.

Mr. Mann: It is not.

Mr. CROSS: The other farmers who settled there when I did were all driven out, too.

Hon. C. G. Latham: From Lake Grace?

Mr. CROSS: No. The most capable farmers could not pay their way in that district.

Mr. Mann: Which locality?

Mr. CROSS: East of Wagin. Despite the fact that the members of the Opposition cry out for stabilisation, they do not explain what they mean by it. What they actually want, I think, is a payable price for wheat, a guaranteed, payable price.

Hon. C. G. Latham: For the new member for Canning.

Mr. CROSS: Wheat growing is a business. It is as much a business as is the running of a store. In my opinion, the wheat industry should not be assisted to any greater extent than any other class of business. It should not receive special treatment.

Mr. Mann: Farmers should receive just the basic wage.

Mr. CROSS: That is, they should be guaranteed their food.

Member: Plus a little tobacco.

Mr. CROSS: Other remedies should be tried. They are available. For instance, if

a person opened a motor garage and afterwards other persons engaged in the same business, and it was found that some had to give up business, those quitting would not get Government assistance.

Hon. C. G. Latham: There is a distinction, surely. The Government would not have encouraged the opening of garages; but the Government did encourage wheat-growing.

Mr. CROSS: That is true. My view is that one particular section of the business community should not expect to get something that is not given to the other sections. Because of the national importance of the wheat industry, it has been the policy of Governments from time to time not only to supply the farmers with food, but to give them every other possible assistance.

Mr. Mann: How has the farmer been nursed?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. CROSS: In a hundred ways. Hundreds of thousands of pounds have been spent in the country to provide water catchments and in sinking dams, as well as in the construction of railways that have never paid. Money has also been lent to farmers for clearing, and seed and fertiliser have been provided for them, and in many other directions help has been given. Stabilisation would be only a temporary remedy because at the present time if anyone came along and bought all the wheat here at 2s. a bushel it would not be possible to sell it anywhere else, for the simple reason that it would not be wanted. We must re-establish the industry and give those engaged in it a chance. We must evolve a plan that will prevent a recurrence of what farmers are going through, and put the industry on a solid basis. The member for Avon (Mr. Boyle) the other night quoted figures showing the average production over a period of five years in certain parts of the State. I made a note of the figures at the time, and I may be permitted to repeat them. The hon. member stated that over the five-year period Westonia district's average was four bushels per acre. It was only 1.6 last year. In the Yilgarn district the average over the period was 3.9 bushels; in Koorda, the figures were 3.2, and in Mukinbudin four bushels. Is it not a ridiculous proposition to permit anyone to remain on areas and attempt to grow wheat when there is no hope of succeeding? If the figures quoted

are correct, and I have no doubt about their accuracy, how long would the farmers there have to wait before they could get, say, a 20-bushel crop?

The Premier: One of those districts last year helped to build up the State's average.

Mr. CROSS: I have looked up the statistics for the last 15 years and found that the figures are only a little higher than those quoted, and indeed so little different as to be hardly worth quoting. My opinion is that consideration should be given to the advisability of closing down on wheatgrowing in some of the areas too far removed from the 10-inch rainfall. Why should we waste time and money in permitting farmers to carry on operations in such areas?

Hon. C. G. Latham: Why did you not stop your Minister for Lands from putting the miners so far out from the safe rainfall area?

Mr. CROSS: I never encouraged that kind of thing. Anyway, the time has arrived for us to take action, and anything that we might do will be of benefit not only to the wheatgrowers but to the State. I propose to quote figures relating to another important industry, because I believe some of the distressed farmers could be given a new occupation.

Mr. Thorn: Relief work?

Mr. CROSS: No, not relief work. There is an avenue that can well be exploited by the State. In the last five years, Australia produced an annual average of 73,000,000 lbs. of bacon and ham. Incidentally, the average consumption in Australia is 70,000,000 lbs., leaving a surplus of 3,000,000 lbs., most of which was exported to the Far East.

• Mr. Mann: And to Great Britain.

Mr. CROSS: We have not a great number of pigs in this State, or in Australia. In 1936 the number was 1,202,752, and there were slaughtered 2,073,000. In Western Australia, the number of pigs on the 31st December last was 81,350, a really paltry total. The figures do not vary very much because in 1936 the State had 76,000. In 1936-37 we produced 4,098,448 lbs. of bacon, and for the year ended 31st December, 1937, we slaughtered 104,863 pigs. Here now is some interesting information for wheat farmers. For the year ended 30th June last, Western Australia imported from the Eastern States 1,334,817 lbs. of bacon and ham, the value being

£74,013. We imported pork as well to the extent of 109,000 lbs. of a value of £4,300. Is it not a scandal that a State such as ours, capable of producing millions of pigs, should import so much of its requirements in this direction?

The Minister for Labour: This is really a country member's speech.

Mr. CROSS: Western Australia did export just a little. Mostly, however, it was sold to vessels at Fremantle. The total was 5,495 lbs., worth £365. We also exported pork to some extent, showing that somebody appeared to be waking up. We sent to Great Britain frozen pork to the extent of 1,278,045 lbs. worth £39,883, and, strange to say, this was converted to bacon and ham in Great Britain. No less than 67 per cent of Britain's bacon and ham requirements are imported, mostly from foreign countries. In 1937 Britain imported £46,000,000 worth of bacon, ham, lard and pig products from abroad. In 1937 Britain imported from Denmark 7.6 million cwt. of bacon, ham and lard, and paid for it £32,448,000. I do not know why this State has not made any attempt to capture that market. It could have done so. I dare say members opposite will remark, "What about the Ottawa agreement?" That agreement, however, regarding the regulation of supplies from foreign countries, has gone by the board; it has been superseded by a bacon marketing board, and a scheme that aims at creating a guaranteed market for the home producers of bacon. That necessitated an adjustment of foreign supplies to conform with British requirements. It was expected that Australia would try to get a share of the trade, which was estimated in 1935 at 8,000,000 lbs. We did not send much more than 1,000,000 lbs. The allocation was increased to 1½ million lbs. in 1936. In 1937 the figure was increased to 22,000,000 lbs., and in 1938 to 23,000,000 lbs., yet we sent less than 3,000,000 lbs. The figures I have quoted indicate a steady expansion of the trade. I have information which shows that we can secure quite a considerable portion of the bacon trade that goes to Denmark. My figures also disclose that the price that the Danes obtained on the British market was approximately 1s. a lb. Now the British farmer is guaranteed on the hoof for his pigs 5½d. to 6¼d. per lb. at the abattoirs. What have the farmers been doing, seeing

that they could not sell the wheat they grew? Has any serious attempt been made to get into this profitable market? What have members opposite been doing?

Hon. C. G. Latham: We have not done what you have been doing lately.

Mr. Withers: You have not made much effort.

Mr. CROSS: The whole of Australia is providing less than 3 per cent. of the requirements that it would be permitted to supply. Great Britain is our natural market and it must be exploited. Instead of our having 80,000 pigs, we ought to have 8,000,000. What is wrong with that? In five years' time we ought to be able to export at least £3,000,000 worth of bacon and ham to Great Britain. At least a thousand farmers could each be exporting a thousand pigs a year. They should feed their pigs on wheat they cannot sell. Farmers generally cannot be said to be in the pitiful position in which so many relief workers in Perth find themselves. When a wheat farm is properly conducted, it should have associated with it a few pigs, a cow to provide butter and milk, and sufficient timber for all purposes. The farmer has no landlord coming round for rent. Farmers in the dry areas should be removed to the more fertile South-West, and permitted to embark upon pig breeding for bacon production. The Government could make advances for the purchase of stock. It could even subsidise bacon factories by paying the interest in the early stages, and thus be the means of establishing three or four factories in suitable areas. In this way the industry could be built up so that the State would ultimately be exporting annually £3,000,000 or £4,000,000 worth of bacon. If we wait until the Commonwealth Government gets us out of trouble, we shall have to wait a long time.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Tell that to the Minister for Industrial Development.

Mr. CROSS: I will tell the Minister and you something else directly.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I have not been listening.

Mr. CROSS: The market to which I have referred should be exploited, and by that means an unprofitable industry turned to profitable account.

Hon. C. G. Latham: What do you think other wheat-producing countries are doing? Are they not doing the same thing?

Mr. CROSS: What other wheat-producing country has a guaranteed market? We have an arrangement whereby we can supply so much bacon each year and share in that market. The Argentine does not possess that facility.

Mr. Mann: We have not the people to enable us to do all that.

Mr. CROSS: We could do something else for farmers who are situated in the dry areas. The Minister for Industrial Development will be interested in this suggestion.

Mr. Watts: Are you sure?

Mr. CROSS: For the year ended the 30th June, 1938, Western Australia imported £959,444 worth of tobacco and cigarettes. For three quarters of the last financial year, that is, up to the 31st March, the rate of importation was as high as previously, namely £673,000 worth. I believe it would be profitable to abandon some of the farms at Southern Cross and Westonia, and transfer the settlers to the tobacco-growing district. The day will come when Western Australia will produce its own tobacco requirements. The market is one that should be exploited. Although I am not a smoker, I know that it is largely a question of taste. A taste for the local product can be acquired.

The Minister for Lands: It is a question of colour.

Hon. C. G. Latham: And aroma.

Mr. CROSS: Our manufacturers are gradually becoming more skilled in the curing of tobacco. I have a little bunch of tobacco that came from Virginia a week ago. It was placed in Plaistowe's establishment in West Perth, and an expert could not distinguish it from the local product. In other words, the local article is equal to the imported leaf, which, in the case I have cited, came from America. This industry must be fostered and an import tax imposed on American tobacco equal to the cost of production. That, of course, will have to be done by the Commonwealth Government. We are getting too much from America while our own people are starving. We hear farmers and graziers lamenting about the price of wheat and wool. No member of the Country Party has been brave enough to advocate any form of compulsion to force women to wear wool instead of Japanese silk.

Mr. Doney: You are right; they are not game.

Mr. CROSS: Several million pairs of silk stockings are worn annually in Western Australia. One can buy silk stockings that are 50 per cent. silk and 50 per cent. wool, and equal in fineness to the Japanese article.

Mr. Mann: What do you know about it?

Mr. CROSS: If our people are to prosper, they must use goods manufactured from local materials, not goods imported from foreign countries. Too long have the wheatgrowers placed their eggs in one basket. They should have kept a few pigs, cows and fowls instead of trying to live on wheat-growing alone. We now find wheat farmers, who are being assisted by the Government, buying eggs at a store.

Mr. Mann: Do not talk such rot.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. CROSS: The member for Wagin (Mr. Stubbs) knows all about that, for he once was a storekeeper. Many things are imported into the State that should be produced here. Last year Western Australia imported boots and wearing apparel from the Eastern States to the value of £1,860,000. More clothing factories should be established here. I was recently speaking to a business man from Sydney, a Mr. Beer. He is one of the largest employers of labour in that city, and had come here to meet some of his agents. With one of these gentlemen I discussed with Mr. Beer the whole position. Speaking about the local industry campaign, he said, "I do not see why I should build another factory in Western Australia. Already I have your market and supply £150,000 worth of made-up goods." I knew that the agent who was with us was selling about £40,000 worth of goods per annum, and that if he could get locally-made goods, he would buy them. We have a few tinpot factories in this State, but my information is that most of their machinery is obsolete.

The Minister for Labour: You should have a look at it.

Mr. CROSS: There is ample scope for additional clothing factories, even if the Government embarked upon the business. Perhaps the Government could render assistance to some company that would set out to supply the local market, and thus find work for our own people. Plenty of scope is

available for a bold policy. It is scandalous that we should be importing so much that we can produce here, and it reflects no credit upon us. I wish now to say a few words about the attitude of the Child Welfare Department.

Mr. Thorn: You ought to know a good deal about that.

Mr. CROSS: I do. Not long ago I asked the department to increase the sustenance for one of my electors. An official of the department made a remark which I strongly resented, and which I told him was untrue. He replied, "I do not know, but will show you the file." I saw the file. The letter about which we were speaking is the vilest I have ever read about any person.

Mr. Thorn: You had no right to see it.

Mr. J. Hegney: Why not?

Mr. CROSS: I made representations to the Department, but received no satisfaction. It is not necessary for me to disclose the names of the parties. I was informed that the fullest inquiries had been made by the department, which was satisfied that the statements were untrue. I then said, "Why not take the letter from the file and destroy it? Why leave it to stand against the character of a woman with six children, to serve as a record against her, when the statements contained in it are untrue?"

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

Mr. CROSS: At the tea adjournment I was proceeding to state that the department concerned made the fullest inquiries into the case, and found that the statements contained in the anonymous letter had no foundation whatever in fact. Nevertheless, the department declined to remove the letter from the file. Accordingly, on the 8th June last, I wrote to the secretary of the Child Welfare Department as follows:—

As you are aware, this woman was left with a large family to rear when her husband died, and is still a comparatively young woman. Your department recently received an anonymous letter containing very serious charges against both her and other people. In my opinion such a letter should not have been accepted by your department, and I understand that beyond a few inquiries from herself no action was taken, or is contemplated, by the department.

In my opinion, further, under no circumstances should such a pernicious letter be attached to a woman's file and held in your department. Therefore I respectfully suggest

that you take action to remove this anonymous letter from the file, and destroy it in keeping with the anonymity that such a missive deserves.

I suggest that the policy of your department be altered so that such anonymous letters shall be treated in a similar manner as is done in civil life: promptly destroyed.

Four days later I received the following reply from the secretary:—

In reply to your letter of the 8th inst., I have to advise that much of our work comes to us through anonymous letters, and I cannot do as you request.

You will note that although an officer of this department inquired regarding the matter, we did not take any further action. Had we thought seriously of the matter we would have got into touch with certain people, but it was not thought any such action was necessary.

We do from time to time get letters from persons who perhaps write out of spite. In those cases, although some heartburning may be caused to the persons concerned, no action is taken by the department once we find out that they are spiteful letters. The communication we received in regard to this woman's case is one of this category.

I care not whether an anonymous letter is written to the Child Welfare Department or any other department, it should never be filed against a person when it has been found to have not the slightest scintilla of truth. This anonymous letter is held for all time against an innocent woman. Its writer was not even game to sign it with initials, or to give any indication of the quarter from which it came. I hope the Minister will take this matter up.

The Minister for Labour: It is the policy of the department.

Mr. CROSS: That policy should be changed. The department, having discovered that the charges were groundless, should not have preserved the letter for posterity. I hope the Minister will take the necessary action in both the departments he controls, for I have reason to believe that the person who wrote this anonymous letter is the person who formerly communicated quite frequently with the Department of Employment from the same centre.

Another subject I wish to touch on is the Fire Brigades Act. That Act was passed in 1916, since which time it has received but slight amendment. One or two serious amendments have been attempted, but no material alteration has been effected. I am sorry that the Minister controlling fire brigades is absent at the moment, because I

wanted him to hear what I have to say concerning the Fire Brigades Board and certain phases of its administration. I hold that the Act should be brought up to date, for it contains some glaring anomalies and injustices. During the last session of the previous Parliament a measure was passed providing for the establishment of bush fire brigades. In my opinion the Act should be amended to provide that one board should control the two undertakings, one of them being for the purpose of metropolitan fire protection and to govern the permanent firemen, and the other for the control of volunteer firemen in country districts and the bush fire brigades. One cannot expect the board as at present constituted to give the time essential to a close watch on the administration of the Act. The salaries received by members of the existing board are fixed by the parent Act, which has not been amended since 1916. Even the chairman of that board receives only a very small salary, and consequently cannot give to his duties the time he would devote to them if he were adequately paid. Apparently the board, under the present system, relies too much on the chief officer for advice and for its knowledge of the administration. Strange things can occur under the present Fire Brigades Act. For example, the salaries of officers, not excluding the Chief Officer, are not fixed by either the Industrial Arbitration Court or the Public Service Commissioner. Instead they are fixed at the pleasure of the board. I wish to draw attention to a strange fact, that the permanent firemen of Western Australia perform more hours of duty per week than any other section of the community. Permanent firemen, except when on annual leave, are on duty during some portion of every day of the year. They still work 84 hours per week. While the men have been agitating for years for a reduction in their hours of work, and have modestly asked for a reduction to 72 hours, which would give them a weekly break of 30 hours in their service, certain officers have received numerous increases despite the notification to the men that money was not available to permit of shortening the permanent staff's hours.

Mr. Patrick: That is an old tale—shortage of money.

Mr. CROSS: There is money for some officers.

Mr. Patrick: They have plenty of money.

Mr. CROSS: Under the existing system the Chief Officer makes recommendations to the board regarding the salaries of officers; and, according to a return I have, he has always been careful to include himself. If we amend the Fire Brigades Act, we should provide at least that the recommendations for salary increases for officers, particularly the Chief Officer—this is not a personal matter—should be subject to review by a Treasury official, the Public Service Commissioner or a court. I propose to give members some idea of the manner in which increases have been allocated. The present Chief Officer was appointed Acting Deputy Chief Officer on the 18th November, 1933, when he received an increase of £36 on his then salary. On the 1st July, 1934, he received his appointment as Chief Officer and naturally was paid an increase of £162. On the 1st January, 1935, he recommended increases, including one for himself, as the result of which he received a further £58. In the same year he considered himself worthy of another increase, and consequently in October his salary was augmented by another £40.

Mr. Thorn: Who granted increases?

Mr. CROSS: The board, on the recommendation of its Chief Officer. The board has power to do that at any time.

Mr. Thorn: Has the Minister no say?

Mr. CROSS: The Minister does not control the Fire Brigades Board.

Mr. Patrick: Where does the board get its money from?

Mr. CROSS: I will tell the hon. member in a moment. For the benefit of the member for Toodyay (Mr. Thorn), I will inform him that the board as constituted has full power in these matters. The Government has two representatives out of nine on the board, and contributes one-quarter of the cost. The Underwriters' Association contributes three-eighths of the cost, and the local governing bodies three-eighths as well. Reverting to the question of salaries, following the increase obtained by the Chief Officer in October, 1935, his salary was again increased on the 1st January, 1936, by another £54 and again on the 1st October, 1936, by a further £66.

Mr. Patrick: What is his total salary now?

Mr. CROSS: On the 1st October, 1937, apparently another increase became due, because the Chief Officer's salary was further

augmented by £36, and in July, 1938, he was given another increase of £20. On the 10th November, 1938, he received a further increase of £21. I do not know what his total salary is now, but the increases he has received since the 1st October, 1931, amount to £513 per annum—and that is not the end of it.

Mr. Patrick: That amount represents the increases he has received?

Mr. CROSS: Yes. Before that he would be paid the salary of a senior fireman, as that was the position he occupied before he received his promotion. I do not know what salaries were paid to Mr. Lapsley or Mr. Lambourne, but I think the Chief Officer's salary is in the vicinity of £800 a year. In addition to that, he is entitled to free quarters, which, I imagine, are worth about £5 a week. He has the free use of a motor car, together with a chauffeur. He is called upon to make frequent trips to the country. Lately, the Government appointed a new member to the board to look into various matters and I think he has been fairly diligent. Whenever the Chief Officer goes to the country—incidentally he spends a lot of his time in the country districts, where there are quite a number of fire stations—he receives an allowance of 30s. per day. That allowance has now been reduced, mainly due to the vigilance of the new board member. Furthermore, the Chief Officer receives an entertainment allowance. I am just wondering what is the limit—it certainly seems to be the sky.

Mr. Patrick: The sky is the limit all right.

Mr. CROSS: Yes. While there is money for that sort of expenditure, there is none to enable the hours of service of the firemen to be reduced from 84 to 72 per week.

Mr. Thorn: What are the Chief Officer's hours?

Mr. CROSS: He is continuously on service, but he can, and does, take time off.

Mr. Thorn: Is he an efficient officer?

Mr. CROSS: I am not making any complaint as to his efficiency. There is a Deputy Chief Officer who is just as efficient as the Chief Officer.

Mr. Thorn: And you are barracking for the former.

Mr. CROSS: No, I assure members nothing personal attaches to my comments. At the same time, it seems to me that certain representatives on the board are prepared to agree to very expensive adminis-

trative costs, although they are not prepared to shorten the hours of service for the men. It is a rank injustice, and until the board can reduce the working hours so as to bring them into conformity with world policy, under which every class of worker has enjoyed reduced hours of employment, a period should be put to these continual increases for the "tall poppies." Speaking of administrative costs, as the result of the appointment of a new member to the board and his vigilance, the expenditure on the annual fire brigade demonstration last year was cut down by at least £400. I do not know why such large amounts are spent on the annual demonstrations. I do not know how much of it is wasted, but when one notices that a demonstration costs as much as £1,851, one wonders in what manner the money is spent. There should be some check by the Treasury upon such expenditure. The board in the past has played some funny tricks. When the present Chief Officer was appointed, the board had dismissed the ex-Chief Officer on account of his age. He had been in the service of the board for a great many years. The board then said to the present Chief Officer: "You insure yourself for £1,000 and we will pay the premium." The board did so until the Government Auditor stopped it. To overcome the difficulty, the board increased the Chief Officer's salary. That course might be all right, but what I object to is that the board could not find money in order to reduce the existing hours of the firemen to a reasonable number. When the present Fire Brigades Act is amended, provision should be made for a tribunal—not in such close association with the Chief Officer—to fix the salary of the Chief Officer, because many good turns can be done by him for members of the board, who would not like to vote against any increases in salaries which he might recommend, particularly for himself, as he would be present and would know how members voted.

When the Act is being amended, the method of contribution towards the cost of the board by the various contributing parties should be altered. The major responsibility of the board is to protect the interests of the fire insurance companies, yet the greater portion of the cost is contributed by local governing authorities. These authorities pay three-eighths of the cost, but in addition are required to instal fire hydrants in their districts. In point of fact, the board has not



power to order the installation of a hydrant in the district of any local authority, nor to direct where it shall be placed. Many of the local authorities in the metropolitan area do their best to meet the wishes of the board, but if they decided to place a hydrant in the middle of a road and to cover it with bitumen, the board could not prevent them, nor could the Chief Officer. The local authority would, however, have to bear the expense. Until a few years ago there were hydrants in Murray street, Perth, almost in the centre of the road. Some time ago, when a large fire occurred in Perth, a motor truck, fully laden with three or four tons of material and with a broken axle, was directly over a hydrant. That fire occurred in Murray-street not much more than 500 yards from Parliament House. In my opinion, those who derive the greatest benefit from fire protection should pay the greatest proportion of the cost. I propose to inform members of what is done in this connection in the Eastern States, because some members opposite are interested in local authorities.

Mr. Thorn: My word, they are.

Mr. CROSS: In South Australia, insurance companies pay five-ninths of the total cost of the board; the local governing authorities pay two-ninths and the Government two-ninths, but with a provision that it pays a maximum of £10,000 per annum, and South Australia's population is larger than that of this State. In New South Wales the insurance companies pay half the cost, the local governing authorities one-quarter and the Government one-quarter. So that in at least two other States the insurance companies pay the greatest proportion of the cost. I think they should do so in this State, too. It is distinctly unfair that our local authorities should pay their full quotas in addition to the cost of installation of hydrants, which is a heavy expense, particularly for a road board district like Bayswater or South Perth, or even Nedlands. I hope this position will be remedied and the Act brought up to date. Arrangements could then be made to stop a highly-paid officer from being sent to the country to examine small, tinpot stations, and perhaps give lectures to men on bush-fire fighting. Highly paid officers should be kept where the risks are greatest.

Mr. Thorn: Your attack is personal.

Mr. CROSS: No.

Mr. Thorn: Yes, it is.

Mr. CROSS: No. I am attacking the present system.

Mr. Thorn: No, you are not.

Mr. CROSS: I have said that when amending the Act provision should be made for a dual undertaking controlled by one board, even as regards administration. One officer, with a permanent staff, should control the permanent staff and stations in the various districts, without interfering with volunteer brigades, thus avoiding a mass of correspondence, collection of fees and so on.

Mr. Thorn: Is it correct that you have had a row with the Chief Officer?

Mr. CROSS: No. I have never had a row with him in my life.

Mr. Thorn: I have heard that you did.

Mr. CROSS: The Act, when amended, should provide for a single fire district covering the whole of the greater metropolitan area. The system is, however, better than it was. A considerable number of the districts in the greater metropolitan area pay their full share of the cost of protection for their districts. North Fremantle, for instance, maintains a staff of men and a highly efficient machine, but that is not the case in the Melville district. Until a year or two ago, the Melville district, although it had a large population, argued as follows: "We can borrow a brigade from North Fremantle and so need not pay much: we will pay North Fremantle £20 a year for protection." So Melville was sheltering behind the men and the machine of the North Fremantle district. In recent years, however, the Melville district has paid the greater share of the cost. A similar practice was followed by other districts in the greater metropolitan area. Until a few years ago, the Chief Officer could not legally send a fire engine from Perth to Subiaco, even if all the buildings in Subiaco were on fire. That difficulty was overcome by regulation. It seems to me the best plan is to have one district. As the metropolitan area extends and additional fire-fighting facilities are required, further arrangements can be made according to the geographical position of the outer districts. Such a course in my opinion would make for greater and better control. Further,

the rate should be the same throughout the whole district and should be fixed on the annual value. If a uniform rate were fixed, there would not be the bickering that takes place at present between the local governing bodies as to which of them bears the greater proportion of the cost. They would all pay the same rate and what they paid would be fixed on the value of the property in their area. Incidentally values are fixed by the geographical location of buildings because a structure on a 20-foot frontage in Hay-street, as members will realise, would be worth a thousand times as much as a house on the same frontage in say Queen's Park.

Because of the opportunities I have of gaining information, and of knowing the situation fairly well, I am convinced that in the interests of the community as a whole and in order that local authorities might receive fair play the Act should be revised and brought up to date. I do not desire to weary members. There are many other matters about which I would like to speak. For instance, I have not said a word about trolley buses, and I have not mentioned that we need a new Causeway. Other subjects require attention, but I shall have opportunities to deal with them at a future date. I assure members that all my remarks have been made with a view to having some improvements effected in the interests of the whole of the people of this State.

On motion by Mr. Abbott, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 8.2 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Tuesday, 22nd August, 1939.*

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

### QUESTION—COMPANIES ACT.

*As to Investment Trusts.*

Hon. H. SEDDON asked the Chief Secretary: 1, Will the Minister lay on the Table a list of companies operating in Western Australia purporting to be investment trusts? 2, What supervision, if any, is carried out in connection with these trusts? 3, Does the Government intend to introduce, at an early date, legislation under the Companies Act to provide for the control of this important branch of investment?

The HONORARY MINISTER (for the Chief Secretary) replied: 1, No, as to do so would necessitate an examination of the articles of association in respect to every registered company. Information as regards any company is available on search at the office of the Registrar of Companies, Supreme Court. 2, Supervision is provided for by Sections 56 and 61 of the Companies Act, 56 Vic., No. 8. 3, The introduction of any legislation such as is implied in this question might have the effect of interfering with the shareholders' control of the management and the investments of any company.

### QUESTION—EDUCATION.

*School Desks.*

Hon. G. FRASER (for Hon. E. M. Heenan) asked the Chief Secretary: 1, How many State schools are still fully equipped with long desks? 2, How many State schools are partially equipped with the said desks? 3, When long desks are replaced by dual desks what further use, if any, is made of the long desks?

The HONORARY MINISTER (for the Chief Secretary) replied: 1, 410 schools equipped with long desks only. 2, 44 schools