

This reversion to the traditional money criterion has a limit on production and employment for which the real resources of organisation, labour, and capital equipment were available in plenty was possibly the master blunder, from which have flowed in inevitable sequence all the frustrations and miseries of the past 20 years.

We are not likely to solve our post-war problems unless we make up our minds to treat money as a book-keeping technique to facilitate the production and exchange of goods and services, not as something the supply of which sets a fixed upper limit to our productive activities. It plays much the same part in economic life as railway tickets play in transportation. It is dishonesty, akin to inflation, to issue tickets for more trains than can be run. It is absurd to cut down the railway service because the ticket office has run short of tickets.

Getting away from mere generalisations, the London "Times" concluded with another very important passage to clinch the argument. On the 24th March, 1942, the following appeared:—

By the agreement signed on the 23rd February, the British and American Governments have laid down the principles which are to govern their future economic policy in pursuit of the objectives set out in the Atlantic Charter: "Improved labour standards, economic advancement and social security."

I have quoted those remarks to establish the fact that there are people who walk the tight-rope as regards economic principles and conditions. They tell us in one breath that after the war there is going to be a depression, that we shall have lower standards of living, that we must open our markets to the world, close local industries and import everything we need under free trade conditions, tighten our belts and be generally miserable. As against those views, I suggest there is a very different attitude. I trust that the motion, if carried, will include provision for a full inquiry as to where we stand with our higher economic authorities and the attitude they adopt towards the questions before Parliament.

On motion by Mr. Doney, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER [5.22]: As leaders of parties will be attending the opening of the austerity campaign on Tuesday afternoon next and as a number of other members will desire to take part in the proceedings, I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday next at 3 p.m.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.23 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 3rd November, 1942.

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The **SPEAKER** took the Chair at 3 p.m., and read prayers.

MOTION—URGENCY.

Gas-Producers.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly) [3.5]: Mr. Speaker, I beg to read a letter of today's date which I have addressed to you—

In view of the fact that motor owners are being subjected to financial loss through the sale of imported gas-producers, which are made from inferior material, and also because the competition of these gas-producers is detrimental to the success of our Western Australian manufacturers, I intend, with your permission, to move the adjournment of the House at today's sitting.

The matter is of extreme urgency, because hundreds of motor owners have been ordered to have gas-producers fitted to their vehicles within the next few weeks, and because, too, I am in possession of information which was not available to me when I spoke on this matter two weeks ago; and unless action is taken quickly many motor owners will be involved in financial loss, while the danger from severe bush fires may be considerably increased.

MR. SPEAKER: It will be necessary for seven members to rise in their places to support the proposal of the member for Pingelly.

Several members having risen in their places,

MR. SEWARD: When speaking on the Annual Estimates a few weeks ago I had something to say about gas-producers, and the effect which unfair competition from the Eastern States was having on our local manufacturers. Since then further information has reached me, and I am convinced that unless effectual steps are taken in the near future to protect possible purchasers from some of the imported units of Eastern States manufacture our motor drivers, and particularly country owners of utilities and trucks, will be subjected to financial loss. From that aspect I shall give

an instance later. There are two phases of the subject to which I desire to refer. Firstly, there is the unfair competition which our local manufacturers have to meet; and secondly, there is the financial loss to which Western Australian purchasers of some of the imported units are being subjected.

Dealing first with the phase of unfair competition, when speaking on the Estimates I intimated that in my own electorate, or just on its border, was a small factory engaged in the production of gas-producers, the proprietors' own particular invention, and that the factory had been obliged practically to cease operations, incidentally refusing no less than a dozen orders, owing solely to the fact that it was unable to obtain the supply of a raw material—steel—from eastern Australia. I know of another firm in the Great Southern district which has been brought almost to a standstill by the same cause. It will be recollected that during last season certain regulations had been gazetted in this State, dealing with gas-producers. Two of these regulations were disallowed. One of them dealt with the particular type of material to be used in the construction of gas-producers. On that occasion I was not greatly impressed with the reply of the Minister concerned, for he did not divide the House on the subject but simply let it go on the voices. Now I draw particular attention to the fact that one of the two regulations was to the effect that responsibility for passing gas-producers was placed on the secretaries of road boards.

Obviously, the secretary of a local road board has no intimate knowledge of this subject—he probably does not know a gas-producer from a cream can—and more than that, he is not qualified to take a gas-producer to pieces for the purpose of ascertaining the kind of material of which the article is made. Consequently it was not right to call upon such an official to pass the unit. That was the real ground for disallowing the particular regulation. However, this does not matter greatly, since a gas-producer has to comply with regulations laid down by the Federal authorities. These regulations stipulate that a certain type of material must be used and that that material must comply with the Australian standard specification, which is based on the British standard specification. In order to place

the matter clearly before members, I shall read a few of the regulations taken from the Federal specification. First there is the definition of generator—

The term "generator" shall mean the vessel containing the fuel and the fire in which the gas is generated.

Rule 3, general, is as follows:—

All materials used in the construction of the producer shall be suited to the load, temperature, chemical and other conditions under which they are employed.

Then there is the regulation dealing with materials of construction—

All materials shall be in accordance with the relevant Australian standards or in their absence with appropriate British standards where such exist. Where it is necessary to use materials for which no Australian or British standards exist, or where it is desired to use new or unusual materials, the general properties thereof shall be such as to comply with the requirements of Clause 3 above.

There are two types of generators, the single-shell generator—

Mr. Marshall: Under what Act are the regulations made?

Mr. SEWARD: I am referring to the Australian standard specification, to which all generators must conform. They have been adopted from the British standard specification.

Mr. Marshall: Under what Act?

Mr. SEWARD: The Traffic Act. The specification applies throughout Australia. There are two types of generator, the single-shell generator and the updraft generator. I will deal with the updraft generator, because we are not concerned here with the other type. In updraft generators, unless a special refractory lining is provided, the shell shall not be less than $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick for a height of 12 inches above the grate or to the top of the gas take-off, whichever is the less. The grate shall be of heavy section, heat-resisting steel, or other approved material. That is the type of generator manufactured here—the updraft—and it is stipulated that it must be not less than $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick. Each of these gas-producers has to be identifiable. It is, therefore, stipulated that a name-plate must be fitted to it in a conspicuous place, showing the trade name, the manufacturer's name and address, the type, model, serial number, R.A.C. rating, the duty and the license number.

Mr. Stubbs: Many gas-producers that I have seen when travelling about the State

have not those particulars attached to the generator.

Mr. SEWARD: Possibly they were made by the owner of the vehicle; but any generator manufactured and sold here must comply with that stipulation. Rule 29 of the standard specification provides that the gas-producer may be rejected if it does not comply with the requirements of the specification, as to materials, design, construction and installation, if it fails to comply with the performance requirements specified, or if in the opinion of the approval authority it is or is likely to become unsatisfactory or dangerous in use. I wish particularly to emphasise this, because later on I shall—I hope—prove that although gas-producers have failed to comply with this specification and the approval authority has refused to license them, that decision was subsequently over-ruled by someone else. It is a well-known fact that the approval authority in Western Australia—the University—will not pass any gas-producer which does not comply with those requirements, which provide that the producer must be made of iron $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick.

That is the standard set, and rightly so I believe, because if it is made of inferior and lighter iron, it will not stand up to the work required of it. The iron will buckle and, owing to the vibration of the truck, the producer will have no life at all and prove completely unsatisfactory to the person who buys it. In addition, very likely a hole will be burnt in the iron and consequently serious bush fires may be caused, because most farmers are taking their vehicles into the harvest field and into places where long grass is growing. Not only that, the life of the producer may be relatively short. It is also a fact that when inferior material is used in the construction of gas-producers, they can be made at a lower cost than when the heavier material is used. We thus have the danger that strong financial firms in the Eastern States will manufacture large numbers of producers from cheaper-grade iron and supply not only their local market but also the market here. They will be able to sell at a price below the price charged by our local manufacturers, with the result that they can flood this market and subject our manufacturers to unfair competition. That definitely is happening today.

In speaking on the Estimates, I mentioned one make of gas-producer, the "Nasco," which I believe is made of the lighter material. I do not desire particularly to single out the "Nasco"; there are other types of producers being imported, the "Brigg" and the "Riordan" and the "Davey." I understand that in the manufacture of each of these gas-producers the lighter material is being used. Unfortunately, local firms have been unable to import steel for want of shipping space; yet at the same time large numbers of manufactured gas-producers have been imported into the State. Supplies and material have been held up for the last three months, and during that period no fewer than 600 to 800 gas-producers have been imported into the State from eastern Australia.

I shall now give the experience of one of our local manufacturers, Mr. Lewis, who went to the Eastern States in a frantic endeavour to secure some material. He went to Melbourne towards the end of July last to try to buy steel for the manufacture of gas-producers. A fortnight's perseverance in Melbourne secured for him approximately 17 tons of sheet steel and about two tons of angle and bar, mostly from Electrolux, Ltd. He had to pay £29 per ton for much of the steel, and the landed cost of the consignment averaged about £15 per ton above Perth ruling rates. If the expenses of his trip were added, this would be about £17 10s. per ton—that was on the 26th September last. This is now apparently the only considerable quantity of steel in Perth, and is promptly being drawn on by the Munitions Department, which is unable to obtain supplies for its own projects, so that we have the position of the Commonwealth borrowing steel which cost about £40 a ton and which will be replaced, when steel for munition projects is again available, at £22 per ton.

Although the matter is in itself small, I doubt whether one could find a more remarkable instance of a man being victimised for his initiative. To date, about two tons have been borrowed from Mr. Lewis, including one ton for Altona Engineering Works, to enable production of seamarkers to continue. Mr. Lewis is intensely loyal and has said that he is willing for the Munitions Department to take all his stuff, if it is necessary. But we hear so often of steel being

available from merchants' stocks in the Eastern States, and see so many abuses of transport in the delivery of gas-producers and other unessential items to Western Australia, both by water and rail, that it obviously should not be necessary for our munitions programme, small as it is, to depend on hard-won private stocks of materials. I have here a letter from the Department of Supply and Development in Melbourne. It is signed by one of the technical officers and is written to Mr. Lewis. The letter states—

I have been endeavouring to arrange supplies of steel to go forward to Perth for producer-gas manufacture and thought we had the matter settled when we were advised that there was steel being unloaded at Fremantle. I have since heard that the matter was a complete fiasco, and that only five tons of steel was released.

At that time, when that steel could not be obtained, and while gas-producers were being brought into this State, I have reason to believe that 5,000 tons of steel were lying on the wharf at Newcastle awaiting shipment to this State. During that time about 400 gas-producers were landed here. I am aware it will be stated that we have a Federal Priorities Committee to deal with the various things that can be shipped to this State. In "The West Australian" of last Thursday appeared a statement by the Minister for War Organisation of Industry, Mr. Dedman, in which he pointed out that certain things only could be shipped or railed or sent by road from State to State, but in order to get them despatched a permit would have to be obtained. I draw attention to two loopholes in the Minister's statement. The list of goods for which permits are required is divided into two sections. Permits would be granted for goods in No. 1 Section in only most exceptional cases; but in No. 2 Section permits would be granted rather more freely; and, remarkable to relate, gas-producers are included in the No. 2 section. I point out that Mr. Dedman also stated that the list was not complete, and that it could be altered or varied from time to time. Why is it that gas-producers are included in No. 2 Section under which permits can be granted more freely?

Mr. Patrick: Perhaps they want to ship them from Western Australia to the East!

Mr. SEWARD: We can make them here. Only last Wednesday when the Prime Minister was in the House, I had an interesting statement made to me. I was speaking to

a maker of gas-producers and he said he had been talking with a chauffeur with whom he had business relations, and who stated that the Prime Minister was unaware that we could make our own supply of gas-producers.

The Premier: That is entirely wrong.

Mr. SEWARD: I hope it is, but that is what I was told.

The Premier: I have had conversations with the Prime Minister about gas-producers.

Mr. SEWARD: I am glad the Premier is able to contradict that assertion. It seemed ridiculous to me that the Prime Minister, who comes from Western Australia, was not better informed, though I could to an extent understand his ignorance on the matter since he is a particularly busy man. The point I want to emphasise is that the placing of gas-producers in Section 2, wherein permits can be more freely granted, allows a loophole for certain undesirable practices by large financial firms in the Eastern States. The Commonwealth Government should be definitely requested to prohibit the importation of gas-producers into this State.

It might be asked whether I have any evidence to support my statement that these gas-producers are being made of inferior material. A few weeks ago I asked the Minister for Industrial Development if it were true that the Nasco gas-producer was constructed of 16 gauge instead of 10 gauge iron. He replied "No." I had an opportunity to inspect one of these units, which had been taken off a vehicle and cut through. The gauge was applied and it was found to be not 16 but 17 gauge iron. Yet our own gas-producers have to be made of 10 gauge iron. The Nasco gas-producer to which I refer was fitted on the truck on the 29th October, 1941.

Mr. Stubbs: Where was it made?

Mr. SEWARD: Adelaide. Twelve months ago it was put on the truck, but it had to be taken off because the iron was buckled and useless. Some time ago a Davey gas-producer was sent over. I understand that the approving authority refused to pass it because it was made of 16 gauge iron. It is interesting to recall that the gas-producer was made in Victoria but was sent to Adelaide to be tested, on the ground that the University in Melbourne was closed, or some such reason as that. It was sent to Adelaide, passed there and then forwarded here to be sold. When it reached Western Australia the approving authority refused

to pass it. It will be seen, therefore, that Adelaide, to the gas-producer world, is the same as Edinburgh to an unsuccessful medical student. The most astounding part was that when the approving authority refused to license the gas-producer, the Minister for Works ordered him to do so. I am going to quote an article of the "West Australian Mining and Commercial Review," for October, 1942, in support of that statement. In the course of an article entitled "Gas-producers; Unfair Treatment for Local makers; Preference for Eastern States types," appears the following:—

State Ministers have been no more active. One has even overridden State laws. State regulations lay down that gas-producers must be made of $\frac{1}{8}$ in. steel plate. It is known that two makes of gas-producers imported into this State by well-established motor firms and made of steel plate only $\frac{1}{16}$ in. thick, have been allowed to be fitted to cars although condemned by the Traffic Department. The Traffic Department was overridden by the Public Works Department which issued a permit for the installation of imported gas-producers.

Mr. Stubbs: That is a serious statement.

Mr. SEWARD: I agree with the hon. member. It does not say much for a Government, which is committed to the protection or development of our secondary industries, that it allows this cheap-jack rubbish to be brought in here. When the authority we appoint to examine and pass these producers, and to guarantee them to purchasers as being the proper units to meet their need, condemns them the Minister for Works says, "No, you are going to pass them."

Mr. Cross: What about the people who are importing them?

Mr. SEWARD: Never mind that. We have appointed an approving authority to examine these things and, if they are not up to standard, to refuse to allow them to be brought in.

The Minister for Industrial Development: Have you tried to check that with the Minister for Works?

Mr. SEWARD: I am taking this publication as my authority. It says that the Minister for Works issued a permit for the installation and use of these gas-producers.

The Minister for Industrial Development: Have you made any attempt to check that with the Minister for Works himself?

Mr. SEWARD: No, I have not. I am reading what this publication says.

The Minister for Industrial Development: I think you might have done so.

Mr. SEWARD: This is a recognised publication in this State. It is a responsible journal. If it can be proved that the statement is wrong I will be only too pleased to give equal publicity to the contradiction.

The Minister for Industrial Development: Why not check up with the Minister for Works first?

Mr. SEWARD: I did not know that the Minister would not be here today.

The Premier: He will be here later.

Mr. SEWARD: It can be referred to him then. That is one of the reasons that actuated me in moving the adjournment of the House. The second reason actuating my decision is the possible financial loss that may be occasioned to purchasers of these inferior types of gas-producers. Recently the Liquid Fuel Control Board broadcast a number of notices to owners of vehicles to fit these gas-producers to their vehicles. I propose to read one of those notices. It is as follows:—

Liquid Fuel Control Board.
(Western Australia.)

Dear Sir.—This communication is forwarded to you as the licensee of the following vehicle or vehicles, namely—

Make of Vehicle. State No. Motor Spirit.
.....
Consumer's License No.
.....

In accordance with instructions issued by the Commonwealth Government you are hereby notified that such vehicle (or vehicles) is/are suitable for operation by producer gas, and that your ration therefore will be subject to a reduction of 75 per cent. as from.....

This notice is given to enable you to have a gas-producer unit (or units) installed before that date. As it is necessary to obtain authority for the fitting of any such unit an application form is forwarded herewith. Such forms should be completed and returned to this office within 14 days of this notice. Authority for the fitting will then be issued.

That is signed by the secretary of the Transport Board. I have seen many notices, which have been sent to me by people in my electorate, stating that if they do not have gas-producers fitted to their vehicles within, say, about three weeks, their petrol ration will be cut down by 75 per cent., unless the owner is able to produce evidence that his financial position is such that he could not afford to have one fitted. I understand that if he is able to do that or the vehicle is an antiquated type not worth the

expense of fitting with a gas-producer, the regulation is waived. But there is a stipulation that if there is any further cut in the petrol ration the owner must suffer that reduction.

When a vehicle owner receives a notice of that description, what happens? He probably goes to a local gas-producer maker. However, local manufacturers of gas-producers have not been able to obtain supplies of raw material for months past and have not any stocks on hand. Consequently the man is told, "We will fit a gas-producer to your vehicle, but we cannot do it for anything from three to five weeks." However, the man cannot wait, because he has been given only three weeks to fit a gas-producer. So he goes to one of the importers and finds that he has stocks of imported units, and moreover that he may be able to save from £5 to £15 by buying one of them. With all these men at the present time any saving in price is a consideration. It must be borne in mind also that the imported article has been passed by the approving authority and contains a guarantee of worthiness. So the man will end up by buying one of those gas-producers because he can get it fitted in the time and also because he will be able to save a few pounds.

In order to find out what was the cost of these imported gas-producers, as compared with the local articles, I rang one of the importing firms. The particular gas-producer about which I inquired was a small one and I was told that its cost would be £45 plus fitting. When I asked what would be the fitting charges I was informed that they would not be very much. I subsequently discovered that they would amount to about £20, so that the total cost was £65, as against £75 perhaps for the local article. I mentioned, a few moments ago, a gas-producer that had been fitted to a truck and had lasted for only 12 months. It had then to be removed because it was so buckled as to be unfit for further use. I want now to give the financial details of that transaction. That gas-producer was fitted at a cost of £75. In the 12 months the repair bill for it amounted to £45 and the owner has now to take it off his truck and instal a new gas-producer at a cost of £60. In other words he has been put to a total expense of £180 in the matter. Had he, at the beginning, installed a local gas-producer it would have cost him

£80 to £90 fitted, so that he has lost, at least, £90 on the deal.

In view of the notices which are going out this is a most important matter to hundreds of motorists in this State. If these inferior articles are to be sold in competition with the stronger and better gas-producer locally made, a serious position will arise. There is another aspect to be considered. I am always reluctant to mention matters which might reflect on departmental officers, but recently, I was particularly struck when a prominent business man in my electorate told me he wanted to fit a gas-producer. I said, "All you have to do is to get a permit." He said, "I cannot get one. I applied and was told that my priority was not high enough. The officer said, 'How are you with your member?' I said, 'I know him very well.' The officer then said, 'See your member about it.' I said, 'Why do they want to see me; why bring me into the matter?' He said, 'I do not know.' I went to the Transport Board and saw the officer in question. I said to him, 'What about so and so's gas-producer?' He said, 'Yes, he was in the other day.' I said, 'Why can he not get one?' The officer then said, 'He can have one,' and he wrote out a permit right away.

There are some ugly rumours going about the city in connection with gas-producers. The manager of one firm told me that he could have sold £500 worth of gas-producers if he could have got car-owners with permits to buy them. He said, "If you give £5 you can get a permit." It is high time this department was searchingly investigated. This gentleman said, "I go down to the Transport Board and get insulted. I go to the Liquid Fuel Control Board and get insulted there."

Mr. North: To whom was he to give the £5?

Mr. SEWARD: After this business man, whom I have mentioned, had stated his case to the board why should it have been necessary for him to enlist the aid of his member to get a permit? I gave no further information to the officer of the board than was already in his possession.

Mr. Berry: But who was to give the £5?

Mr. Cross: What about the £5?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. SEWARD: I will conclude my remarks by reading this article in the "West Australian Mining and Commercial Re-

view" of October last. It will bear out most of what I have just stated.

Today, the position is unchanged. The war situation has grown more serious and petrol restrictions have become more severe. A large section of the transport in this State must depend upon gas-producers but large vested interests in the motor world in Australia are still sending producers made in the Eastern States into Western Australia to stifle local enterprise. As the history of vested interests in the United States has only too plainly disclosed, these large motor companies are not even abashed by laws and Acts of Parliament and to those who have made even a superficial investigation, it is obvious that the matter calls for examination.

The general indifference displayed by the State Government and Western Australian members in the Federal Parliament is discouraging to those men who have pioneered the gas-producer industry in Western Australia. If State Ministers and Federal members possessed a genuine desire to alter the position, their desire would extend beyond the words they so glibly utter. It is known that Mr. Nairn, M.H.R., and Speaker in the House of Representatives, and Senator Fraser have given verbal and written assurances that they will aid local producers and force the Eastern States octopus to withdraw. Once away from their home State they have been more silent than the grave. Mr. Marwick, M.H.R., has also expressed sympathy with the plight of local manufacturers but his feeling has never found utterance in Federal Parliament.

State Ministers have been no more active. One has even over-ridden State laws. State regulations lay down that gas-producers must be made of one-eighth inch steel plate. It is known that two makes of gas-producers imported into this State by well-established motor firms and made of steel plate only one-sixteenth of an inch thick have been allowed to be fitted to cars although condemned by the Traffic Department. The Traffic Department was over-ridden by the Public Works Department which issued a permit for the installation and use of the imported gas-producers.

Local manufacturers are also being starved for steel plates, but for months ships from the Eastern States have been bringing Eastern States gas-producers into Western Australia, occupying very valuable shipping space which could have been used for steel plate. Had this been done, sufficient supplies for local makers would have been available for over a year.

One local manufacturer, realising that if producers were being made in the Eastern States, steel plates must be available, went to Victoria recently to see if he could expedite his orders. He was unable to do so but did manage to secure a release from the Department of Munitions to buy steel plate in a "black" market at an exorbitant price. When the steel did arrive here, it was seized by the Army.

Manufacturers are convinced that steel plate is available but that Western Australia, except as a place to exploit, ranks too small in the shipping world and that the big motor firms

now threatening the local industry can still exert too much influence when it comes to securing shipping space. But to permit manufacturers in the Eastern States to have steel and deny it to manufacturers here is deep injustice.

The Shipping Priorities Committee which has been in the process of formation for nearly two months, is not yet in a position to do anything to force priority shipments. Those administering the priority shipments regulations in the Eastern States must wilfully close their eyes when it comes to loading boats for this State and the matter of gas-producers is a most blatant example.

Unfortunately those engaged in the industry here, when they come to look for the real scapegoat, find themselves in that glorious state of "circumlocution" where their grievances are handed from one official to another without the least attempt being made to deal with the matter. As each apparent scapegoat is attacked, he dexterously produces another scapegoat and turns the hunt from himself. To the pursuers, however, the pursuit is equally futile. Unable to find anything or anyone tangible to attack, they daily become more irritated and more baffled and if they persist in their pursuit, refusing to be a party to doubtful business practices, and persist in their rights granted to them by the Constitution, they become overwhelmed by the futility of their efforts and go mad—a prey to vested interests and Government circumlocution. Or worse still, they apply to turn their factory over to munitions. Refused this because they are engaged in an essential industry which the Governments are too disinterested to keep supplied with raw material, the whole unhappy cycle begins again. The owners then seek to join the Forces and are refused because they are engaged in an essential industry, dying rapidly because of unfair Eastern States competition. One day some irate owner will attempt to murder those who have misled him with words—but that is hoping too much.

The Premier: That is extravagant language, and does not ring true!

Mr. SEWARD: If the Premier investigates the position he will find that the language is not extravagant, but that it applies to the position in Western Australia today, or during the last few months.

The Premier: That some irritated owner will murder somebody?

Mr. SEWARD: I do not know about that. One man, in a frantic effort to save his business, went to Melbourne to buy steel and was finally able to purchase some at £40 a ton, but when it arrived here it was seized by the Army. He is being driven to the point of desperation. Our local firms are not financially very strong, and are unable to remain out of production for months at a time. Unless they can produce and

pay their employees they must go bankrupt, or at least go out of business. In desperation a man might do something very serious.

The Premier: But not murder!

Mr. SEWARD: I sincerely hope that such a man would not go as far as murder. But they are driven to desperation at the present time, so I make no apology in moving this motion in order to direct public attention to the desperate position of the gas-producing industry in this State.

MR. BOYLE (Avon): I second the motion. A survey of the market in Western Australia would be worth-while. In the pre-war year there were about 63,000 motor vehicles registered in Western Australia, including trucks and cars. They offered a potential market of about £50 per gas-producer to be fitted, which represented in the aggregate a possible return of over £3,000,000 to manufacturers in this State. What happened was this: As soon as a market presenting such possibilities was made available in this State, which, it should be borne in mind, pioneered the gas-producer, it was at once seized for the Eastern States. Western Australia had pioneered the gas-producer manufacturing industry, and had spent many thousands of pounds in bringing the gas-producer to the serviceable unit it is today. In that respect I desire to pay a tribute to the University of Western Australia which sent its research officers and young engineers to a centre in my electorate where they worked for 12 months, giving their scientific services free, in order to evolve the gas-producer unit we have today as a practical working unit for attachment to motorcars and so forth.

Mr. Doney: Did they initiate the idea?

Mr. BOYLE: I do not say they did that, but those of us who remember the old days on the goldfields will recollect that gas-producers did excellent work in the back country, the charcoal being produced from local wood. The gas-producer of those days was quite a different proposition from the unit we have today. The gas-producer as we now know it has reached almost the perfected stage, and thousands of pounds have been spent in Western Australia in reaching that objective.

Mr. Doney: We pioneered the gas-producer in its application to motor vehicles.

Mr. BOYLE: Not only did we do that, but the organisation of which I was for-

merly president for some considerable time—the Wheatgrowers' Union—as far back as ten years ago spent £200 in investigating the possibilities of the gas-producer as applied to motor vehicles. That was at a time when petrol was 1s. 8d. or 1s. 6d. a gallon. Today the gas-producer has reached the stage when it is essential and necessary for war purposes if for nothing else, and especially is it essential for tractive purposes in the back country. Last year I had the pleasure—and it was a most instructive task—of making two trips to the Eastern States, once accompanied by Mr. Frank Mather of Kellerberrin. Mr. Mather is a noted pioneer of the gas-producer industry and a very clever engineer. I am sorry the Minister for Works is not in his place at the moment for I am sure he would concur in my statement that Mr. Mather is little short of a genius in this respect. Mr. Mather and I, in investigating matters associated with gas-producers, visited Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney, but we discovered that they were in the stone age there with regard to research work. We found that even the officers of the Commonwealth Council for Scientific and Industrial Research did not know much about the subject.

We made certain arrangements in the Eastern States, as a result of which I had visions of seeing established in my electorate works that would employ 100 men and perform a latter-day miracle—sending a Western Australian manufactured product to the Eastern States. But I counted without my host! Mr. Mather and I found in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney that immediately a gas-producer manufactured in Western Australia was improved to the extent desired, the rights were bought by Eastern States manufacturers. In South Australia the rights of the Powell gas-producer were bought by a firm. The particulars appeared in the Press at the time, but I shall not mention what price was paid for it, because that is a private matter. In Victoria a firm controlled by a man named Sleigh bought the patent rights. Today those Eastern States firms are dumping the manufactured article here, and are tending to drive our local firms completely out of existence. The motion is well-timed. Whether the murderous intentions of the editor of the "Mining and Commercial Review" will be carried into effect, I do not know. I am rather inclined to agree with the Premier

that that sort of talk is not necessary. Even if our Western Australian industry is being murdered, it would not justify such language.

Mr. Warner: It might not be murder, but merely insecticide.

Mr. BOYLE: All this makes it very hard for me in particular, for I spent a great deal of my time, quite unrequited—I did not look for anything out of it—in endeavouring to foster the interests of this industry, but all I can see today is wholesale dumping. It is still continuing. Only today I received a letter from a Mr. D. G. Sutherland who has a garage at Tammin and has been interested in the manufacture of gas-producers. Incidentally, the industry has attracted many of our younger men and has afforded an opportunity for latent engineering skill to be applied to the manufacture of gas-producers, a tendency that we should encourage to the utmost. Under yesterday's date Mr. Sutherland wrote to me as follows:—

With reference to your letter of October 18 concerning steel plates, I wrote Mr. Fernie as you suggested but to date have no reply. Neither have I been able to secure any of the shipments of plate which came in about the date advised. I have standing orders with McLean Bros. & Rigg and Sandovers, but the latest advice from them is that they have received nothing also. At the present I have not one plate of steel left to work upon and am cutting up old harvester grain boxes to finish the job we are on. This is a sorry state of affairs, but no business can carry on without receiving supplies for over four months. I hold sufficient permits to keep going flat out until Christmas, but what am I to do? Are these farmers, relying on me to supply units, to be able to transport their harvest on a restricted petrol ration? The whole business is rotten. The game stinks of Eastern States dumping and it is high time it was publicly exposed.

That is the position of one young man. He has put his money and time into the work and is employing six men at his garage at Tammin. He is left high and dry for lack of steel plates. At the same time, Eastern States manufacturers can procure all they require from Pt. Kembla or from the Broken Hill Proprietary, Limited, and so continue turning out the manufactured article, which is being dumped here.

Mr. Patrick: Or put it on their own vehicles.

Mr. BOYLE: They do not even do that; they are just dumped. Mr. Sutherland refers in his letter to Mr. Fernie, and I got in touch with the latter. Mr. Fernie, who is always very active in assisting those who require help, informed me that the officer who attends to that phase of the departmental activities was on holiday, but he immediately took the matter up. I am hopeful that some relief will be afforded Mr. Sutherland. General Motors, Ltd., of South Australia is engaged in the business and has set up what it describes as the Nasco gas-producer plant. The first three letters are quite correct, but the name of the plant should be the "Nasty Plant." Before the dumping, the price charged in South Australia was £47 10s. fitted. The member for Pingelly referred to fitting costing £20. I assure members that they could be fitted comfortably for £12 and £15 would be quite a normal charge.

No doubt these people are able to charge £20, but I found in Victoria that Powell gas-producers from Western Australia were being fitted at £120 per unit. The Mathers gas-producer was being fitted here for £45 for the unit plus £12, a total of £57, and I think the Perth price today is £60. We do not hear of the Nasco gas-producer being fitted for £80 or £100; it is sold for £47 10s., plus cost of fitting. Thus all the time the Eastern States are following up our people, who are working on little capital, and General Motors, Ltd., is dumping its stuff into this State. I was in Adelaide when 173 gas-producers were ordered by Tasmania and, of that number, 140 were of Western Australian design but they were made in Adelaide. Now we find that our own manufacturers cannot get supplies of steel. Mathers, for some time, used condemned pipes out of the goldfields main and made a good job, but there is a limit to the quantity of that material that can be used.

I hope that the Government will carry out the wishes of the House, and protest most strongly against this wholesale dumping against an industry pioneered in this State. These gas-producers were manufactured with the aid of Western Australian money and without assistance from the Eastern States, and now the industry is in a fair way to being wiped out and another of our manufactures relegated to the limbo of forgotten things.

MR. KELLY (Yilgarn-Coolgardie): The motion is very timely, and I agree with most of what the member for Pingelly and the member for Avon have said, but I wish to dissociate myself from references made by each of those members. The member for Pingelly, by inference, cast a reflection upon the integrity of members of the Liquid Fuel Control Board.

Mr. Cross: He did not tell us the name of the man who wanted the £5 note.

Mr. KELLY: The hon. member's case would have been much stronger had he answered that interjection, notwithstanding that interjections are disorderly, and given to the House the information he had received. To make a bald statement that he had been told that members of the Liquid Fuel Control Board were prepared to accept a tip of possibly £5 to recommend to prospective purchasers certain makes of gas-producer was a very poor way of supporting his case. An allegation of that kind calls for more specific evidence than we have been given, and I regret that the hon. member saw fit to make such a statement in the House. The second statement to which I take exception was made by the member for Avon, who said most emphatically that the Nasco gas-producer is an utter failure.

Mr. Boyle: Oh no, I did not.

Mr. KELLY: I disagree with that statement.

Mr. Boyle: I did not make that statement.

Mr. KELLY: The hon. member went near enough to condemning the gas-producer manufactured by General Motors Ltd. He went so far as to say it was a nasty one. Quite a number of those gas-producers have been working in my electorate for a long time and are still giving good service. If the opinion of users of the Nasco gas-producer were obtained, it would be found that many of those units are quite satisfactory.

Mr. Boyle: Do you know that they are of 17-gauge iron?

Mr. KELLY: The making of the statements I have mentioned is not to be commended, and I dissociated myself from them.

THE MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: I regret that I am unable to express appreciation to the member for Pingelly for having given me some in-

dication of his intention to move the adjournment of the House on this subject, because he gave me no indication of any kind. If, therefore, I am unable completely to answer every point brought forward by him and the member for Avon, the fault is not mine. The information I will give to the House is such as I have been able to carry in my mind, and it is not to be expected that one speaking under those conditions can reply completely to every point raised by two members, who have prepared their cases and have had an opportunity to inform their minds on the subject.

Mr. Boyle: I had to draw from the same source.

THE MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: While listening to the hon. member, I came to the conclusion that that was what he was doing. Let me deal briefly first of all with the speech of the member for Avon. He told us that Western Australia had pioneered within Australia the manufacture and use of the gas-producer in association with motor vehicles. That is quite true, and it is only fair to say that the Powell brothers, in their efforts on their farm at Bruce Rock, played a very important part in developing this industry. It is also true that at least two local manufacturers sold their manufacturing rights to makers in one or other of the Eastern States. That was quite a logical thing to do. We could not hope that no one in eastern Australia would manufacture gas-producers, considering the very large number of motor vehicles used in those States. The local firms concerned, I think, were very wise to place themselves in the position of obtaining something out of the manufacture of gas-producers in the Eastern States, for use over there, by selling their patent rights to Eastern States firms.

Mr. Boyle: That was all they got out of it.

THE MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: I presume they made the best bargain possible. If they had not made some bargain of the kind, it is certain that they would not have obtained a penny out of the manufacture of gas-producers in eastern Australia. I was in Adelaide a few weeks ago and took particular notice of the number of vehicles fitted with gas-producers and the different brands of gas-producers used on those vehicles. My

chief impression was that only very few motor vehicles in South Australia were fitted with gas-producers.

Mr. Patrick: One in 23!

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: And, further, that only very few in Melbourne were so fitted. That has given me very seriously to think regarding the methods used by motorists in South Australia and Victoria to obtain the petrol necessary to enable them to operate their motor vehicles without having gas-producers fixed to them. It seemed to me, on the surface of things, that users of motor vehicles in other States must receive better consideration in respect of supplies of petrol made available to them, than is received by Western Australian motorists.

Mr. Seward: Have they been told now to fit the gas-producers as we have been told?

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: I am not in a position to say whether they have, but I take it for granted that the policy with respect to gas-producers would be on an Australia-wide basis.

Mr. Patrick: That is set down in the National Security Regulations.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: It may very well be that the petrol rationing scheme is not administered as severely and strictly in accordance with the regulations in other States as it is in this State. I am not in a position to speak authoritatively on that aspect; but from what I saw in Adelaide I feel myself justified in having searching inquiries made to ascertain why it is that so few gas-producers are used on motor vehicles in the other States, compared with the large percentage of motor vehicles in this State fitted with gas-producer units. While I was in Adelaide, the South Australian Government very kindly made available to me a motorcar for the purpose of enabling me to visit a town some 50 miles from the capital. This car was fitted with a Pederick gas-producer.

Mr. Boyle: Western Australian!

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: The gas-producer itself is made in South Australia, but made under the patent sold by the Pederick company in this State to a manufacturing firm in Adelaide. I was naturally interested to get the opinions of the motorcar driver regarding his experience with gas-producers, and I

questioned him quite casually as to what exactly his experience had been. He told me that he had had considerable experience with four different makes—the Wishart, the Powell, the Pederick, and the Nasco. I asked the driver whether he would indicate his order of preference in respect of those four makes. His reply was that he placed the Wishart producer very slightly above the Powell, and the Powell very slightly above the Pederick; and then he ceased to talk to me about the makes of gas-producers of which he had had experience. So I asked would he not be good enough to give me his idea of the Nasco. In a tone full of disgust he said he hoped that he would never again have to drive a motor vehicle to which was affixed any Nasco producer of which he had had experience. I thought it highly significant that a motor-driver born in Adelaide, and having lived there all his life, should so frankly give his ideas about the makes of gas-producers he had experience of, including the Nasco, and that in this frank expression of opinion he should place the only real Adelaide make of gas-producer definitely at the bottom of his list of preference. The member for Avon, in what I thought very extravagant language, told the House that there was wholesale dumping of gas-producers into this State from the other States.

Mr. Boyle: You made that statement yourself.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: I did not.

Mr. Boyle: Not now, but previously.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: No. I feel sure I have never made a statement that there has been wholesale dumping of gas-producers into Western Australia.

Mr. Doney: Did you use the word "dumping" at all?

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: I may have used the word.

Mr. Boyle: Did you accuse a member of Parliament of being associated with the matter?

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: What was happening for a long time was that too many gas-producers were being brought to this State. I am frankly of the opinion that no gas-producer unit, not even one, should be sent to Western Australia. We have sufficient

firms engaged in the manufacture of gas-producers in this State, with sufficient experience and sufficient skill, to manufacture efficiently every unit required for use in Western Australia. If we are in that position—and we are—there would not be any justification, even in peace-time, for space on ships or on trains to be taken up with bringing manufactured gas-producers from other States to Western Australia; and of course there is ever so much less justification—in fact, there is no justification whatever—for using space on ships or on trains in time of war to bring to this State gas-producers manufactured in other States.

Member: Can you tell us how many gas-producers have been imported?

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: No; but no matter how low the number may be, it is altogether too high. The member for Avon also said that eastern Australian firms engaged in the manufacture of gas-producer units obtain all-steel plate and other raw material required to enable them to make as many gas-producers as they wish to make and can sell. I suggest to the member for Avon that his statement in that regard is not as correct as he might think it is, or might wish it to be.

I come now to deal briefly with statements made by the member for Pingelly. I am sorry the hon. member had such hectic patches in his speech, for he to a large extent spoiled, I thought, what would otherwise have been an appropriate deliverance upon a highly important subject. His case was not improved the tiniest bit by several of those hectic splashes in which he indulged. I think it must have been indicated to him by the remarks of the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie that his speech was to a considerable extent spoiled by those particular exaggerated and absolutely unproven statements.

Mr. Cross: The hon. member did not tell us who demanded the fiver.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: The member for Pingelly suggested that the Minister for Works had engaged deliberately in sabotage against local firms manufacturing gas-producers.

Mr. Seward: Hardly that.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: The member for Pingelly did say that.

Mr. Seward: I say the Minister for Works did over-rule the approving authority in one case.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: Members who heard the statement of the member for Pingelly in this regard could have come to no other conclusion than that the Minister for Works did something outside of regulations and rules and law, to enable a certain number of imported gas-producers to be sold and put into use in Western Australia, to the detriment of local manufacturers of such units. If the Minister did that, he engaged in a deliberate act of sabotage against local manufacturers of gas-producers.

Mr. Boyle: You are making an extravagant statement now.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: I am not. I am giving a plain calm interpretation of what the member for Pingelly said in this respect. If the member for Avon, for instance, imported gas-producers from the other States and sold them here, he would, in effect, be sabotaging the local industry.

Mr. Boyle: You would not use that term, surely?

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: I would. I consider I would be justified in using it. The firms in the metropolitan area that, in recent weeks and during recent years have been importing gas-producers have, in effect, been sabotaging the local industry. Why should we reserve all our condemnation and abuse for the manufacturing firms in the Eastern States? Is it not an ordinary business proposition, from their point of view, to sell their gas-producers wherever they can, even though Western Australia be one of the places? The manufacturers of the "Nasco" gas-producers could not sell one of their gas-producers here unless some individual or firm placed an order with them.

Mr. Boyle: They have their branch here.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: They do not sell their gas-producers directly to the public of Western Australia. So I suggest to the member for Pingelly, to the member for Avon and other members, that they should not reserve all their criticism and condemnation for the firms in eastern Australia that are sending gas-producers to Western Australia; neither should they reserve their condemnation and criticism for State Ministers, or for officers

of Commonwealth and State departments. The greatest offenders in this matter are the business firms and business men in this State who send orders to Adelaide to General Motors Holdens for "Nasco" gas-producers to be sent here.

Mr. Warner: You are quite right in that statement.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: I think that is a fair and logical view to take of the situation.

Mr. Boyle: Are Attwoods, Ltd., agents here for the "Nasco"?

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: As regards the complaint made by the member for Pingelly against the Minister for Works, that the Minister was approached with respect to the gas-producers in question, the Minister did not over-ride local regulations or local laws. He did not over-ride any regulations or any laws. He referred the people concerned to the experts at the Western Australian University and said that, if the experts were prepared to test the units and if they approved of their use here, there would be some justification for releasing the gas-producers for sale. The University experts said that the units were not up to standard or to specification or regulations, and therefore could not be approved for sale. They went further, however, and said that if alterations were made to the units and these proved satisfactory, the units would be approved for sale. The information I have here is that the required alterations were effected, thus making the units safe and up to the necessary standard or regulations. The result was they were then—but not until then—approved and released for sale.

Mr. Seward: The Premier has a letter. You might read it.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: I have not the time nor the opportunity at this stage of the debate to commence studying a file which has just been brought in and which does not happen to be a file of my department.

Mr. Boyle: You are doing very well unprepared.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: I suggest that a reasonable course for the member for Pingelly to pursue would have been, after he obtained his information, to approach the Minister for Works and discuss the point with him, at the same time checking up on his

information. If the member for Pingelly did not desire to take up the valuable time of the Minister for Works, he could quite easily have approached the Under Secretary for Works, Mr. Andrew. Had he done so, he would have been furnished with all available information on this phase of the matter. Had he obtained such information he would, in his fair-mindedness—I am positive—have made a statement on this matter different from the one he made today. I think that would not have been asking too much of the member for Pingelly. I hope that when in future he takes hold of a subject of this kind, or any subject, and gets information from this and that and some other source which causes him to become filled with righteous indignation, if I may put it that way, he will—before giving publicity to the information made available to him—take advantage of the opportunity to interview the Minister concerned, if a Minister is involved, or to interview an officer of a department, if an officer is concerned, so as to check up on the ex-parte statement given to him by some individual or some firm in the community.

Mr. Boyle: Are you laying down a formula?

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: No. I am making what I consider to be a reasonable suggestion which would take away from discussions of this nature much exaggeration, misunderstanding and heat, which can easily be engendered if statements are put forward without a complete knowledge of all the facts. I could easily become heated and excited about the matter but I do not propose to do so, because I am certain that, instead of helping the situation, it would hinder it and make our efforts to right the position not as effective as we all could wish them to be. Every member of this House, I am certain, wants to achieve the right result in this matter. Our desire is to shut out completely from Western Australia gas-producers made in the other States, because we know we have in our State the capacity and skill essential to meet all the needs of motorists in Western Australia for gas-producers.

Reference was made by the member for Pingelly to a list of shipping priorities issued by the Minister for War Organisation of Industry, Mr. Dedman. The member for Pingelly quite rightly said that gas-producers had a place in one of the two lists issued

by Mr. Dedman. I would point out that the two lists of goods and commodities so issued are Australia-wide in their application. I went through both lists carefully. The prohibitions to be enforced in respect of the goods set out in both lists might apply, very appropriately and very sensibly, to interstate trade between the four main States of Australia. But they would not apply at all appropriately or sensibly or wisely in respect of the trade, say, of Western Australia with the other States or of Tasmania with the other States. So it is quite clear to me that those lists have been prepared mainly for the purpose of controlling interstate trade between the four main States of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland. As soon as I read the lists in the newspaper I took the matter up personally with Senator Fraser. He has assured me that he will be guided very largely by the recommendations made to him from time to time by the local State Shipping Priorities Committee, which was set up by our State Government to try to ensure that the only goods sent to Western Australia by ship are those goods which are first of all approved by our local Priorities Committee.

I feel fairly certain that no more Eastern States-made gas-producers will come to Western Australia. I can assure members that Senator Fraser is not only keen to prevent any further gas-producers from being shipped to Western Australia, but is on the warpath about the last consignment that came from Adelaide. I should not be in the least surprised if, when he has tracked that last consignment down and found out who was responsible for allowing these gas-producers to be put on the ship at Port Adelaide, the officer responsible is sacked. I give the House the assurance that Senator Fraser was intensely interested in this question of bringing a shipment of gas-producers from the Eastern States to Western Australia, just as he is tremendously keen to ensure that only goods required for essential purposes in this State, which we cannot make here, shall be allowed to take up space on ships and goods trains coming from the Eastern States.

When I was going to Adelaide on the East-West train a few weeks ago I was horrified to see at one of the sidings on the

trans-line a goods train with made-up gas-producers in the trucks and, on another truck, a made-up motor body for a passenger bus in this State. We are trying to track these things down. We are at them all the time. As I have explained, we have the very deep interest of and the fullest measure of support from Senator Fraser, who is the Assistant Minister for Shipping, and we have the fullest measure of support from Mr. Beasley, in whose hands was recently placed the job of controlling the traffic on ships all around the Australian coast. I can tell members that they need have no fear about the bona fides and driving force and strength of Mr. Beasley, the Commonwealth Minister for Supply and Development, who is out to see that this job is done properly.

Mr. Wilson: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: He will do it and Senator Fraser will assist him to the utmost extent to see that it is done quickly and completely. I am not very interested in what the "Mining and Commercial Journal" might contain. I get that journal every month. It is sent to me free. I give as much time to the reading of it as I possibly can, but I suggest that those concerned with the publication have too many personal private axes of their own to grind for me to be over-impressed by what they care to publish from time to time, especially when they publish it in the extravagant form and language used in the article that the member for Pingelly read to the House this afternoon. When he says that this matter has been represented to Senator Fraser and other Commonwealth Ministers and Commonwealth members and that these men, while here in Western Australia, have expressed sympathy and yet when they have gone back East have remained silent as the grave about the matter, I say that the editor of the "Mining and Commercial Journal" is not telling the truth. He is libelling these men and does not know what he is talking about, and has made no effort to check up on the facts as to what Senator Fraser and other Commonwealth members do when they go from Western Australia to the other States.

Mr. Doney: You are indulging in the same kind of heat—

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: I am as cool as the member for Williams-Narrogin, and he

is one of the coolest members of the House. I suggest that anyone who happens to publish a journal or a newspaper or any publication of that character is not entitled to get away with it always. Ministers of the Crown and members of Parliament take a great deal from these various journals and newspapers. They take most of it on the chin quietly and come up again for more.

Mr. Boyle: It is good advertising!

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: Once in a while I think we are entitled to make a protest, when they overstep the bounds of reason and make statements that are absolutely without a vestige of truth. I propose to have a talk to the editor of the "Mining and Commercial Journal" some day, because I have that particular copy of the publication on my table. It has been there for several weeks, but I have not had enough time to give any further consideration to it. I do not regard it as being of sufficient importance comparatively to take up my time or that of anyone else in this House until there is more time to spare than at the moment. It is low on the list of my priorities!

In connection with the ugly rumours that are being circulated around Perth—that one can obtain a license or certificate or permit to fit a gas-producer if one goes along to some officer of the Transport Board or the Liquid Fuel Control Board and gives him a fiver and that one cannot get a permit unless one does that—here again I think the hon. member would have been well advised to make that information available to the Minister concerned; that is, the Minister for Works or the Chairman of the Transport Board, Mr. Millen, who is also Chairman of the Liquid Fuel Control Board. It is hardly fair for anyone to come to this House and say, "It is understood you can only get a permit if you go down and hand someone a fiver."

Mr. Cross: I do not believe it.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: It is a statement that immediately places under suspicion every officer employed by the State Transport Board and every officer employed by the Liquid Fuel Control Board. That is not a desirable situation in which to place officers. We, as Ministers of the Crown, do not mind being placed in that position by the member for East Perth, because we can always

fight back, but the officers employed by the Transport Board and those employed by the Liquid Fuel Control Board cannot. They have to take it without any right of complaint or protest. I suggest to the member for Pingelly that, if he obtained this information from some reputable person in the community, and I assume he did, he should endeavour to get that person to make some kind of statutory declaration so that it can immediately be checked and, if the person spreading these rumours cannot substantiate what he has said, he can be punished.

I have tried to answer the main points brought forward, and I conclude by again giving to the House the absolute assurance that Senator Fraser is working very hard and, I am sure, effectively upon the problem of ensuring that no non-essential goods will be shipped or sent by train from eastern Australia to Western Australia. He is also working upon the problem of ensuring that no essential goods shall be sent by sea or by rail from the Eastern States to Western Australia if those goods are being made or can be made in the factories and workshops of our own State.

Mr. Marshall: In sufficient supplies.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly—in reply): In view of the assurances given by the Minister for Industrial Development, I ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

QUESTION—CIVIL DEFENCE.

As to Responsibilities.

Mr. NEEDHAM asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Did the State agree with the Commonwealth Government that the State shall take full responsibility for the planning and implementation of civil defence measures, including the financial responsibility involved therein, subject to financial assistance being given by the Commonwealth? 2, Has the Commonwealth Government made any grants to Western Australia for approved civil defence projects in vulnerable areas—(a) If so, what are "approved projects"? (b) What is the amount of the grant or grants and how much has been received by the State Government? 3, Did the Commonwealth also agree that Western Australia could supplement this Government grant on a £ for £ basis from loan funds? If so, to what extent has the State borrowed under this arrangement? 4, Has the Commonwealth assisted by the

issue of equipment as apart from grants?—

(a) If so, what is the value of such equipment? (b) Has this been supplemented in any way by the State itself in providing equipment for—(i) vulnerable areas, as defined by the Commonwealth Government as eligible for Commonwealth grants; (ii) other than vulnerable areas? (c) If so, to what amounts? 5, What is the amount spent by the State Government, apart from Commonwealth grants, for civil defence, excluding cost of equipment as set out in question No. 4, from—(a) loan moneys, as set out in question No. 3; (b) revenue; (c) any other moneys, in—(i) vulnerable areas, as defined by the Commonwealth Government as eligible for Commonwealth grants; (ii) other than vulnerable areas? (d) What are the respective purposes included in this expenditure? 6, What is the amount paid to local authorities for civil defence in W.A. from—(a) Commonwealth funds; (b) State revenue; (c) Loan moneys, in—(i) vulnerable areas, as defined by the Commonwealth Government as eligible for Commonwealth grants; (ii) other than vulnerable areas?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Mines) replied: To provide the information asked for in the questions would occupy the time of several officers of the Civil Defence Council for at least two or three days. These officers are at present very busy on the work connected with the Civil Defence Council, and to take them away would delay essential work. However, the following is a history of the arrangements made between the Commonwealth and the States regarding civil defence:—At a Premiers' Conference prior to the outbreak of war it was agreed between the Commonwealth and the States that in the event of war responsibility for the planning and implementation of civil defence measures would rest with the States. Some time after the war, however, the Commonwealth intimated that it was prepared to share the responsibility with the States, and it was announced that the Commonwealth Government would provide the sum of £1,000,000 to be distributed amongst the States, on the understanding that the States would spend, on a £ for £ basis, sums equivalent to the grants made to them by the Commonwealth Government. The first £500,000 of the £1,000,000 grant was distributed partly on a population basis and partly on what the Commonwealth Government termed a "needs" basis, "needs" being interpreted as

the degree of vulnerability of the States. The share payable to this State out of the first 500,000 was £29,405. In distributing the second £500,000 the needs of this State were deemed to be more urgent, and our share was £46,000. In total therefore our share of the first £1,000,000 was £75,405. The expenditure by the States, entitling them to claim a £ for £ subsidy from the Commonwealth, had to be confined to certain projects which are termed "priorities." These are:—(1) Controlled lighting schemes; (2) Fire fighting schemes; (3) First aid organisation and medical equipment; (4) Warning systems; (5) Training of key personnel; (6) Instructions to the general public; (7) Shelter provision; (8) Evacuation of civil population at recommendation of local military commandant; (9) Disposal of civilian dead. In regard to the expenditure from the grant of £46,000 from the second £500,000, the Commonwealth intimated that the States would not be confined to the priorities, provided the expenditure was approved by the Commonwealth Government. In regard to the money to be provided by the State, the Loan Council agreed that loan moneys could be raised for this purpose. Any expenditure from the grant had to be made within districts approved by the Commonwealth. These districts were known as "vital areas." The State was given the right to determine the financial responsibility which should exist between itself and the local authorities. Allocations could be made from the Commonwealth grant to local authorities provided the grant in no case exceeded half the cost of the item. The result is that local authorities have been called upon to bear half the cost of the public shelters erected in their districts. More recently an amount of £2,160,000 has been promised by the Commonwealth Government for equipment. It is understood that of this sum £160,000 will be spent on steel helmets, text books and films for free issue to the States. One million pounds will be expended on fire fighting equipment under lease-lend arrangements for loan to the States. Of the remaining £1,000,000, £500,000 will be used for the purpose of anti-gas equipment, including respirators, which will be issued free to the States. The balance of the second £1,000,000—viz., £500,000—will be granted on the original £ for £ basis, and will be available for expenditure on fire fighting equipment, trailer pumps, hose, sand bags, etc. No allocation has yet been made of the amount.

set aside to provide equipment. In regard to the expenditure already made this State has spent on administration costs £11,075. This money has been met from Consolidated Revenue and is not subsidised in any way by the Commonwealth Government. The expenditure from loan moneys on the projects which are subsidised on a £ for £ basis with the Commonwealth is £44,305. This amount is augmented by a like amount from the Commonwealth grant, so that the expenditure in total is £88,610. In addition an amount of £28,283 has been spent from the Commonwealth grant to subsidise local authorities for expenditure incurred by them on shelters. The local authorities have, of course, spent a like amount. The total payments from the Commonwealth grant are therefore £72,588.

The commitments of the Civil Defence Council amount to £150,000. In this amount is included certain fire fighting equipment and sand bags amounting to approximately £100,000. Some of this equipment will be provided free of charge under lease-lend arrangements, but as no allocation of the grant for this purpose has yet been made it is not possible to estimate the value of the items to be supplied. The balance will have to be provided from State and Commonwealth funds.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

- 1, Water Boards Act Amendment.
- 2, Supply (No. 2), £1,350,000.
- 3, Albany Reserve Allotments.
- 4, Perth Dental Hospital Land.

BILL—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 27th October.

MR. MANN (Beverley) [3.34]: I have perused this Bill and am satisfied that it is a good one. I do not intend to delay the House further than to say the measure has my whole-hearted support.

MR. DONEY (Williams-Narrogin): I, too, approve of this Bill as far as it goes. I had hoped that it would have gone a little further. I had wished, although I did not expect it, to find in it provisions dealing with facilities for the disposal of ashes from gas-producer plants. The need for action in that direction was first brought to my notice by the West Arthur Road Board. Since that time, numbers of other road boards have written in regard to the matter. I know that the town of Katanning, represented by the Leader of the Opposition, and that of Kellerberrin, and probably quite a number of others throughout the State, are interested in this matter. When the West Arthur Road Board wrote me on this subject, there was apparently some uncertainty on the part of the members of that board as to the measure of their liability—if any—in the event of a fire occurring.

At that time the board had a number of these fire-pits on some of the roads in the different parts of its district. They were of the dimensions considered proper by the Local Government Department. My inquiries put me in touch with the Minister for Local Government, who is also the Minister for Works; the Solicitor General; the Under Secretary for Public Works; the Under Secretary for Lands; and Mr. Rattray, as well as other officers, and disclosed the common opinion that as the road board concerned for the moment, the West Arthur Road Board, had interfered with existing conditions any loss that arose from that interference would be the board's responsibility. That appears to be quite a clear though unfavourable summing-up of the position. The same opinion held good in the case of the Kellerberrin and Katanning Road Boards, and any others that might have taken similar action to that adopted by the West Arthur Road Board.

I then approached the Government with a view to having legislation introduced with the aim of exempting boards from liability in respect of fire-pits which they had already dug. After considerable delay—and I admit the delay was justifiable—I found the Government disinclined to take action. I wanted that action not only for the protection of the boards but also to lift liability from the farmers. Today the technical responsibility for fires from gas-producer ashes rests on the owner of the motor vehicle concerned. But since in no more

than one out of a hundred cases or thereabouts would it be possible to identify the guilty driver, the total loss necessarily has to be borne by an entirely innocent person, to wit, the farmer. He, therefore, as all can see, is in a most unenviable position. As I see the position, it is the duty of this House to rescue him from his predicament. Some time later, in company with the Leader of the Opposition, I suggested to the Under Secretary for Public Works that, having regard to the distances which can now be run without disposing of ashes, fire-pits might be built, not on the open road as was at first suggested, but in those centres where there are at least half-a-dozen houses, and where there will always be found somewhere about the centre of the townsite a bare space suitable for the erection of a convenient stone or brick container. In such a position there would too, of course, generally be people about. The motorist would, therefore, be inclined to take more care, whilst there would be a far greater likelihood of identification in the event of a fire resulting.

It can be seen that the position is one which gives scope for a great deal of legislative ingenuity before it can be adjusted with fairness to the three parties concerned, namely, the farmer, the motorist, and the local governing authority. The farmer, of course, could do something by way of protecting himself if he cared to go to the expense of an insurance premium. For that matter the Minister might be able to provide a means of building up a compensation fund, for instance, from the license fees payable, and from such a fund the farmer's insurance premium could be paid. Apparently the Minister has found it altogether too difficult to legislate in that respect, for nothing is contained in the Bill to deal with that phase. The Minister proffered an explanation which, I admit, to some extent seemed to justify him in omitting from the measure the provisions I have requested. He pointed out that in these days when cars and trucks can travel up to 1,000 miles or more, without any need to pull up to throw out the ashes, not nearly the same necessity existed for the sinking of fire-pits or the provision of other protective measures. Nevertheless I hope the Minister, when he replies to the debate, will make some comment on that aspect, and I trust that his comments will be of such a nature as to offer some explanation of why the pro-

visions that I had hoped would be embodied in the Bill have not been included in it.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan): The action that is being taken generally by local government authorities regarding bush fires, their prevention and control, is highly commendable. I would be glad to see action taken with a view to each centre or ward of a road district being supplied with sufficient equipment to permit of adequate control of bush fires. That is an exceedingly important matter and never more so than at this juncture. I know that road boards generally are doing what is required, but I hope the provision will be made compulsory. Where it is not being done, I hope the Minister will insist upon the necessary precautionary measures being undertaken. I know of one road board that saved at least four houses from destruction by fire last year, and that body felt that the insurance companies should at least have made some contribution towards the cost of paying the road board's employees for the work entailed. The matter was taken up with the underwriters who, however, stated that payment of any portion of the money due to the workers could not be made. The fact remains that that road board on that occasion saved a good deal of loss. While I cannot say that all four houses were insured, I should imagine that some of them were. I feel that the underwriters should be asked to give further consideration to this matter, because the action taken by the road board must certainly have materially reduced the risk that the fire could have imposed upon them. I hope it may be possible to include an amendment in the Bill to give effect to what I suggest, and to make compulsory the provision of equipment by all local government authorities located in districts where the growth of grass and herbage is prolific.

Mr. Doney: That means all over the State.

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes. Practically all over the State.

MR. McLARTY (Murray-Wellington): I support the second reading of the Bill. Legislation dealing with grass fires is of great interest to country districts. Each year the danger from fires increases, and anything we can do to minimise that tendency should be readily undertaken. I was interested to hear the member for Williams-Narrogin mention gas-producers. In my opinion, those units are becoming more

dangerous each year, and I find that many who use them are not very considerate regarding the interests of the farming community. They dump their ashes wherever it suits them, and in my electorate last summer this caused several fires, some of which had disastrous results. The suggestion advanced by the member for Williams-Narrogin that at certain points ash-pits or some other preventive measure should be provided, is wise, and could be adopted with profit to the State. Even at this stage I hope the suggestion that hon. member advanced will be adopted, for it would improve the Bill. Provision has been made whereby the Railway Department will more efficiently burn off its reserves. I wholeheartedly support that move, and so will every member who represents a rural constituency.

As already pointed out during the debate, the railways will not be able to import Newcastle coal, as a result of which Collie coal will be used throughout the agricultural districts. I do not condemn Collie coal for one moment; we are very lucky to have it. Nevertheless we cannot get away from the fact that fires have occurred in many portions of the State as a result of the use of Collie coal. Anything the Railway Department can do to protect the interests of farmers regarding burning off its reserves should be undertaken promptly. There is another individual I wish to have dealt with most effectively. I refer to the person who goes about the bush and starts fires indiscriminately, whether in the burning period or without it. That practice is still being adopted. When such a person is caught and convicted he should be dealt with most severely. I know it is exceedingly difficult to prove such a charge, but that type of individual is one of the greatest menaces we have at present regarding rural fire risks. The Bill also proposes to give local government authorities the right to provide farmers with fire-fighting apparatus. I think that is most desirable, and there is no doubt that the pumps that the road boards keep in stock for supply on application by farmers, are most effective.

Mr. Sampson: You refer to the knap-sack pumps?

Mr. McLARTY: Yes, they have been of great advantage. It is remarkable what a little water can do in fire-fighting. I have seen outbreaks of fire that, had it not been for the knap sack pump, would have caused

miles of country to have been burnt out. Simply because those pumps were available and proved so effective, great damage was avoided. Anything that can be done in the way of supplying such facilities should be encouraged. I am glad the Bill has been introduced, because I believe it will enable something more to be done to minimise the existing danger and prevent the country from being burnt out.

MR. WATTS (Katanning): I support the Bill. The only part to which I desire to make any particular reference is that which gives the Minister authority to postpone the prohibited times after the expiration of the period under Subsection (1) of Section 9. The Minister will recall that I have discussed this matter with him and informed him that I thought he was on the right lines, but I am wondering why it is necessary to provide that the advertisement of the Minister shall be inserted before the commencement of the period. The Minister has received a letter from the Plantagenet Road Board, Mt. Barker, and if he can remember the communication he might, when replying, make reference to it. There the position is that the period commences on the 22nd October, but even now in that district the grass is green. Representations have been made to him to do something in the matter, which apparently is an impossible business as the law now stands. It has been suggested to me that we might find some way out of the difficulty, but I cannot see any way under the existing law. Nor can I see that this clause in the Bill will give him authority to do what is suggested. Any action he might take under this measure, had it been in operation this year, must have been taken before the 22nd October. I would like the Minister to say whether he does not think that those words in the clause requiring him to take action before the commencement of the period should be deleted. Other than this, I have no point to raise regarding the Bill.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (in reply): When moving the second reading, I mentioned that after a piece of legislation such as this has been tried and proved, one is very tardy to introduce amendments unless actual practice has shown that such amendments are necessary. In this instance the amendments brought forward

are some of many which have been recommended to the department and asked for by different interests in various parts of the State. In the main the amendments embodied in the Bill have come from the advisory committee set up by the Lands Department so that road boards and people could have an opportunity to submit their views.

The member for Williams-Narrogin was actively associated with an approach to the Minister for Works for an amendment of the Act controlling local government to enable local authorities to arrange for the construction of pits suitable for the deposit of ashes from and for the cleaning on the roadside of gas-producers. The proposal was referred to me as one more appropriate for inclusion in the Bush Fires Act. A very close examination of the proposal showed that it would be difficult indeed to relieve the local authorities of responsibility if they made pits by the roadside as a repository for ashes, and bush fires started from them. With the progress of years, the improvements to gas-producers and the technique of their use, it now rarely happens that these units are, in practice, emptied by the roadside. Usually one can travel many hundreds of miles before the hopper needs cleaning out, and the only action taken by the roadside is that of re-fuelling. If anything goes wrong with the gas-producer unit, if clinker jams the air vent and cannot be removed, it becomes necessary to clean out the whole of the hopper, but that is a rare experience today as compared with early practice.

Members who use these units know that it is not difficult to travel from Perth to Albany and back without having to clean out the hopper. I have travelled 1,500 miles by a gas-producer-driven vehicle without having to clean out the hopper or give it any attention. As the technique in the use of gas-producers develops, what was originally thought to be necessary, such as roadside pits every 50 or 60 miles, according to the capacity of the unit, is now quite unnecessary. Apart from that aspect there is a prospect, where local authorities have arranged for roadside pits, of great difficulty for some types of vehicles in getting to the spot and having their units cleaned out as intended. I remember one on the roadside south of Mingenew; there is a trough and one has to back a vehicle in order effectively

to use the pit. When it becomes necessary to clean out a unit on the roadside, it is due to the fact that the car will not function in the existing condition of the unit. This sort of thing does not happen at set distances; it has to be done wherever it occurs. If it happens on the road, the driver chooses the best spot and does the job there.

On the question of compensation to cover local authorities in the event of bush fires starting from the pits, a very difficult prospect arises and because of that, because we found that, when considered from all angles, it was undesirable to have a very difficult matter only partly covered by such legislation and because of the improved practice in the use of gas-producers, we decided that it would be better to leave out such a provision. Our best advice to local authorities is for them not to have such pits installed and, where they have been installed, to relieve themselves of any responsibility in connection with them.

Mr. Doney: Have you anything to say regarding the liability to farmers? Actually this devolves upon the guilty motorist, but only seldom can you find him.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That brings to mind the point raised by the member for Murray-Wellington. In seasons such as the present one gas-producers become a greater menace in the matter of starting bush fires. Members are aware that, when following a vehicle fitted with a gas-producer, one may see, in some types, the red coals within the producer and it only needs an extra bump, perhaps on a bush track where there is a strip of dry grass in the centre, and the coal falls out and starts a fire that causes very serious damage. But all of those things, I suggest, cannot be included in legislation of this sort. Gradually there will be improvement in conditions, and appliances probably attached to gas-producers to minimise danger. Those are things which I consider we should regard as exhausted before we try to cover the position in a Bill of this nature.

In reply to a point raised by the Leader of the Opposition, the clause appearing as No. 2 in the Bill was given most serious consideration by me, because it does seem that if any dates are proclaimed for the commencement of a prohibited period, it is wrong by Ministerial decree to vary such proclaimed dates. However, it is highly necessary to take every precaution anticipating that normality will prevail, and, because of

that, to endeavour very early in the season to arrange for the opening and closing of dates. In my opinion, the prospect of the Plantagenet Road Board is that the board may have trouble in several zones in the particular area that is worrying it today. It is true that although its closing date is the 15th October, a suggestion was made to the board that the date should be the 15th December; but the board itself was adamant on the point; and equally adamant were the advices to me that December would be the most appropriate time for such a wet district, where grass and undergrowth continue to be green until the middle of the month, although in the same district one will find areas that get burnt out.

So where there is diversity of type of country as in that road district, we have attempted, in the amendment appearing on page 2 of the Bill, to meet a difficult situation not only as obtaining in Plantagenet but as may obtain also in Northampton, where there are undulating country and varying types of country on which the ridges will burn six or eight weeks before the date fixed in the Plantagenet district. Timber country is very unlikely to burn before almost the end of the year. On analysis it will, I think, be found that the provision in the Bill will meet the situation. I am hoping that before next year's dates are proclaimed—the Plantagenet Road Board being a very helpful board—a better understanding will be reached as regards large parts of the district, as to which shall belong to a certain zone and which to another zone, the best advice being applied to best suit the circumstances. I appreciate highly the manner in which the Bill has been received. I regard the measure as a step forward, and trust that, gradually, we shall approach the subject year by year and achieve something that will in a general way be of benefit to the country.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 5—agreed to.

Clause 6—New section:

Mr. McLARTY: Whilst not objecting to this clause, which relates to the burning of potato tops and tomato plants and empowers the Minister to allow burning-off to take

place during the prohibited period, I ask the hon. gentleman would it not save time if the local authority were empowered to decide when the burning-off should take place? I presume the Minister is apprised by the local authority as to whether it is desirable or not that certain burnings should be permitted. If that is the case, I do not see why the local authority should not have the power which the Minister takes under the clause.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In my opinion it would be highly undesirable to allow a local authority to have delegated powers in such an important matter as this. The Minister would be advised by field officers of one or another department as to the necessity of the burning, outside or within a prohibited period, as suggested, of potatoes or tomatoes or any other plant subject to disease and requiring to be burnt. I consider it highly necessary to keep strictly departmental the control of such a matter.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 7 to 9, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY DURATION AND GENERAL ELEC- TION POSTPONEMENT.

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER [5.13] in moving the second reading said: When Japan entered the war last December, Parliament decided that it would not be expedient or practicable to hold the general election which normally would have been due early this year. Action was taken, therefore, to postpone the election for a period not exceeding 12 months. How justified that action was is shown by subsequent events. The very day which probably would have been chosen for the election was the day on which a North-West town was subjected to a very intense bombardment from the air. In that terrible assault many lives were lost and a great amount of damage done. For a long period we were living under a constant threat of invasion at any time, and several other attacks were made on other portions of the North-West. Had the invasion materialised, it is problematical what the effect would have been at that particular stage.

We are now faced with the question of deciding whether the election will be held early next year, or whether it shall be fur-

ther postponed. While some people complacently think that the position has been entirely rectified and that there is now no danger of war coming to our shores, we have it on the authority of the Prime Minister and other Commonwealth Ministers that the danger to Australia is still very real. It cannot be brushed aside contemptuously, and it is wrong for people to say, in order to reassure themselves, "It cannot happen here." We must take a realistic view of the situation and be prepared to meet any development. With the momentous battles proceeding at this very moment on two or three fronts—particularly those in which Australians are engaged—it is impossible for anyone to predict what might happen even two or three weeks ahead.

In the circumstances, this is not the time to divide our people by controversies on local issues that will occur if an election is held. Our paramount task is unquestionably the successful prosecution of the war. Had there been a lack of co-operation by the State Government or the State Parliament, had either displayed hostility or refused active assistance, then the people should have the opportunity to pronounce an opinion upon such conduct. But that is not so. It can truly be said that nobody can accuse the members of this Parliament—the members of the three Parties and the Independents—of not being anxious, indeed, not eager to do everything possible to assist the Commonwealth Government in our war effort. The paramount, the vital, issue at the present time is the successful prosecution of the war. That will make all the difference to the outlook of the people of Australia, as well as of the people of the Allied Nations. The fact that we have done everything possible to assist in the war effort has been fully recognised by the Commonwealth Government. The three Prime Ministers who have been in office since the outbreak of war have paid tribute to the splendid co-operation rendered by the State Governments.

Members will recall that when I was speaking recently on the Estimates, I gave an idea of what that co-operation was. I mentioned that of the four senior officers of the departments which I control, three were engaged to a great extent on war work. The Conservator of Forests has been seconded to the Commonwealth Government and is now in Melbourne solving forestry problems on behalf of the Commonwealth. The Auditor General

is the local officer dealing with war organisation of industry; he is devoting a very considerable portion of his time to that work. The secretary of the Premier's Department, Mr. Stiffold, is entirely engaged on work relating to manpower. That is typical of what is occurring in the other State departments. Our highest-paid public officer, the Commissioner of Railways, has, together with the Chief Mechanical Engineer, been seconded to the Commonwealth Government for work connected with transport. They are devoting the whole of their time and energy to that work.

The Commonwealth Government has made many requests for personnel of State departments to be made available, and the Government has not felt justified in refusing the requests, except in regard to one or two officers who, we have pointed out, could not be spared, and the Commonwealth Government accepted the reasons we gave. During a war, trained personnel is essential. It is not possible to begin training men for key positions. The State Government has many officers with years of valuable experience behind them. The Commonwealth Government was not able to get men to do the particular type of work it wanted done, and State officers were consequently made available for the purpose. The Minister for Works could tell the House that practically all his staff has been engaged on matters connected with vital defence projects. The Main Roads Department, the Chief Architect's Branch, the Director of Works—all are engaged in work directly concerned with the war effort. No matter how biased he might be, nobody could say that this Parliament or the parties of which it is composed have not been enthusiastic in co-operating with the Commonwealth in the prosecution of the war.

If action is not taken to postpone the elections, the Legislative Assembly will automatically expire on the 31st January next and, between that date and the date of the elections, the State will be without a Parliament. There are obvious and serious objections to this. Many matters of great urgency connected with the war effort arise from day to day, and there might be very important matters that would have to be referred to the State Parliaments. Last year, after the elections had been postponed, we had very deep problems to tackle in connection with civil defence. After the Government had had an opportunity to make

satisfactory arrangements with local authorities, within a week or two there was no difficulty in calling Parliament together. Parliament met and members expressed their opinions about what should or what should not have been done at that stage. In fact, I think we can say the position was met to a very great extent during that session of Parliament. Parliament was not prorogued and we met on two occasions. If Parliament had not been called together on the first occasion to deal with controversies existing at that time, there would have been tremendous dissatisfaction throughout the State.

There is another matter that may necessitate the calling of Parliament. I refer to the proposed Commonwealth referendum. I do not know when the Commonwealth Government's proposals will be submitted to the people of Australia. I hope they never will be, but a convention is to be summoned in about a fortnight's time at which they will be considered in all their bearings. As a result of that convention there may be modifications of the Commonwealth Government's proposals, which may make them much more acceptable than are the present suggestions. This Parliament might need to be called together to express an opinion in regard to the matter. I am speaking entirely without my book, but after this convention the Commonwealth Government may say, "This convention stands adjourned for two or three months. We have a different set of proposals to put before the people." I am hoping that the Commonwealth Government will prove amenable to reasonable suggestions at the proposed convention, in which case we may find ourselves in agreement for the time being. That is to say, we may agree to the proposals being put into operation for a certain time in order that post-war reconstruction may be expedited and facilitated in every way without a permanent alteration of the Constitution. I visualise that it may be necessary to call Parliament together for that purpose, after the convention has taken place.

Even if nothing occurred to require a sitting of Parliament, the holding of an election would mean that for some time Ministers would be engaged in prosecuting campaigns for their election, and would be away from their offices for a considerable period. I think it can be said that hardly

an Eastern States mail day passes without our receiving important correspondence from the Commonwealth Government which has to be dealt with expeditiously. That correspondence is sent to the various Ministers. The whole business is kept moving, and decisions are reached which, while in themselves they may not appear tremendously important, make all the difference between carrying on in a properly organised, expeditious way and having a lot of bottlenecks and loose ends which tend to delay decisions and consequently delay more important matters. Another aspect which is of importance is that there is a practical difficulty in satisfactorily conducting an election. While for security reasons we cannot say much about where Western Australian troops are located, we all know they are scattered throughout the world. Some are in Canada, some are in the United States. Numbers of our Air Force are in England. I saw in this morning's Press that some were available for the top end of Russia around Murmansk. Some are in Syria, some in Egypt, some in East Africa and the Far East, and others are in the North and South-West Pacific zone. In fact it can be said that Australian troops are almost all over the world.

Amongst these people are Western Australian citizens who should not be deprived of their citizen privilege of recording a vote as to the type of Government they want for the State from which they come, merely because they are fighting in the war. For certain reasons, numbers of soldiers from the Eastern States are in Western Australia, and numbers of Western Australian soldiers are in the Eastern States. That applies not only to the Army, but also to the Air Force. Again, numbers of women have enlisted in the Fighting Services, and some have been sent to the Eastern States for training and other purposes. In any event the majority are away from their homes and districts. In a strict interpretation of the Electoral Act they may be struck off the roll if they cannot be found or identified. They are scattered all over the place.

Mr. McLarty: That will be the case till the war ends.

The PREMIER: I am not very sanguine, but I hope that it will not be long before the war does end. If this Bill passes I hope we shall see the finish of the war or

some prospect of its termination before the period of extension of this Parliament's life ends.

The Minister for War Organisation of Industry wanted to shut down the mining industry and disperse its manpower into other occupations. We were successful in retaining a skeleton of the manpower of that industry, but about three-quarters of those who were engaged in it have been called up for active service, or are in Civil Construction Corps and scattered throughout the State. In fact, some of them have gone to the other States or to the Northern Territory. Because the population of the six or seven mining constituencies has to a large extent shifted, it would be difficult to hold an election. Many other people, apart from those on military service, are absent from their electorates, and would be difficult to trace.

When the North-West was attacked by bombing raiders of the enemy air force the Government immediately arranged for the evacuation of, at least, the women in the dangerous and vulnerable areas, and consequently while a few of those women have gone back the majority are still away from their homes, where they would be in grave danger even at the present time. It is not so long ago—a matter of a few months—when we had a bombing raid over Port Hedland, and such a raid might recur at any time.

Mr. Berry: It might take place here at any time!

The PREMIER: It might, but the point is that it has taken place there, and was successful to the extent that we were not able successfully to counter-attack. We would probably receive a fair amount of notice of an attack on the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Works: They have reconnaissance planes over the North-West.

The PREMIER: The Minister for Works reminds me that regular reconnaissance planes travel over our North-West areas. If the Minister for Lands could tell a story in that respect he might relate what he saw with his own eyes. If we did decide to have an election the rolls would give us some concern. They would need drastic overhaul. We would be faced with the task of printing them, and with the shortage of manpower it could not be carried out efficiently, or in the time. If one thing is needed in connection with elections it is a proper and up-to-date roll. At the present time it is

difficult to see how that could be arranged. The cost of conducting an election is not so extraordinarily great from the standpoint of State Revenue expenditure. It is about £9,000. But another thing to be remembered is that a large expenditure is always incurred by rival political parties and candidates. While candidates are only supposed to spend a small amount of money, political organisations can and do spend large amounts.

Mr. Patrick: Would you conduct the election for both Houses if one is held?

The PREMIER: I do not think there will be an election, so I will not jump that hurdle.

Mr. Patrick: To have two elections would involve extra expense.

The PREMIER: We have considered that eventuality. The money which would be spent by the State could be saved, and the money of political organisations could, we think, be better invested in the war effort than spent in an electoral campaign, which would not make much difference to the present state of affairs and could hardly be justified in the circumstances. Bearing all these factors in mind the Government has come to the conclusion that the same procedure as was adopted last year could be followed again, that is, that the elections be postponed for a maximum period of 12 months with the proviso that if this House at any time desired, or felt that the time was opportune to hold an election, a motion carried constitutionally would ensure an election being held. For these reasons I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Patrick, debate adjourned.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1942-43.

In Committee of Supply.

Debate resumed from the 29th October; Mr. Marshall in the Chair.

Vote—Agriculture, £94,370.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

[5.35]: There are several matters outside the usual developmental or administrative items in respect of this department with which I wish to deal. The first on which I desire to comment is the table of figures which appeared in "The West Australian" of Friday last. It purported to show that Western Australia had received certain assistance for

its primary industries from the Commonwealth Government. Members may have noticed that comment and table which suggested that, in reply to a question asked in the Senate by Senator Collett, Western Australia had had, by way of Federal assistance to agriculture in the past 10 years, no less a sum than £7,682,000. If we analysed that table we would find that many of the claims made in submitting these figures in reply to the question will not bear much examination. In the first place it is foolish to print by itself a table which suggests that any State has had some assistance for any particular industry unless for comparative purposes there is some sort of balance sheet to show what these same industries have contributed to the Commonwealth over those years. In addition, there is the aspect of the many industries in other States that have been subsidised and that have no bearing on Western Australia's agriculture.

So, the printing alone of a table of this sort is not merely very misleading but creates the impression that Western Australia is the only State to receive assistance from the Commonwealth Government for agricultural industries, whereas other States have received, not merely for primary industries but for secondary industries too, assistance—and lavish assistance in some cases—from the Commonwealth Government. Even assuming, however, that these figures represented straight-out grants and gifts to the producers, they do not give a comparison at all with the sums received by primary producers of all sorts in the other States. I have tried to get those figures, but they are not available. I can mention sugar, wine, cotton, rice and others that have been assisted by the Commonwealth. It is only by the publication of the figures in connection with those industries that the ones printed in reply to the question by Senator Collett have any value.

Mr. Boyle: Thirty-five industries have been assisted!

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. In Western Australia we find a lavish claim that our agricultural industry has been assisted to the extent of seven and a half million pounds during that period. How much of that sum came out of the pockets of the people of this State; and what proportion of it is represented in flour tax?

Mr. Patrick: That was not confined to Western Australia.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If we take our harvest at 35 million bushels we arrive, through the years, at a colossal sum. I draw attention to what appears to be a type of propaganda. The heading in the Press was "Primary Production. Federal Assistance to W.A." Included in the paragraph was a table showing that £7,000,000 has been spent in this State in the last 10 years. It will not bear examination. Let us take the wine industry! In our humble way we have developed the industry and only a relatively small quantity of locally-produced wine is consumed within the State. Even on that small quantity nearly £10,000 has been paid to the Commonwealth in excise duties, whereas £5,900 appears in the table published in "The West Australian" as the amount of financial assistance rendered to the State by the Commonwealth in connection with that industry.

Then there is the tobacco industry, in respect of which the table shows we have received £14,000 within the ten-year period. Had it not been for the insistence of the State Government, the Commonwealth Government would have flattened-out the tobacco industry in Western Australia long before now. Yet here in the table that "The West Australian" broadcasts to the world indicating that Western Australia has received £7,500,000 from the Commonwealth in ten years, it is shown that £14,000 of that aggregate amount was received on account of the tobacco industry. As against that we find that for the 1940-41 season, on the tobacco produced in Western Australia, the Commonwealth collected in excise an amount of £30,000. The whole thing is ridiculous! We do not find, in a prominent place in "The West Australian," anything to counter the suggestion that the Commonwealth has been lavish in assisting Western Australia's primary industries to the tune of £7,500,000 in ten years. That is a most unsatisfactory position.

Mr. North: It is a taste of unification.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If the publication of such statistics is to be of any value, we should have some comparison furnished regarding assistance rendered to other States, and there should be a balance sheet indicating what our industries have subscribed to Commonwealth coffers during that period. On several occasions during the last year or two I have made reference to the manpower problem. Two years

ago in this Chamber I expressed the view that, before hostilities ceased, the manpower problem would be the major one affecting industry in Western Australia.

Mr. Sampson: That is already true.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If we take the position that has developed within the last 12 months, we find that in every industry, particularly every rural industry, there is serious dislocation because of the difficulty experienced in securing labour. That dislocation is due to difficulties that today are usually referred to as the manpower problem. At the outset, voluntary enlistments made their effect felt in those industries in which our younger people are engaged. In such industries as dairying and fruitgrowing, we found very quickly that there was dislocation throughout the country districts. The withdrawal of those young men, first voluntarily and later by calling up, has developed a very serious position in all our rural industries and activities. On our farming, dairying, orchard and pastoral properties, the consequent problem has become exceedingly intense for those left behind to conduct productive operations. I know of instances not only in connection with wheat and dairy farms but with properties of a million acres and more, where the holdings have to be looked after by one or two people only. As I voiced the opinion in this Chamber when speaking on the Address-in-reply, I consider many of the call-up activities have been indulged in very thoughtlessly and unwisely.

Members: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We have reached a stage where, unless a curb or an absolute ban is placed on further withdrawals from some of our industries, it will be very difficult to see that anything of the industries will be left for rehabilitation when hostilities cease. One very unfortunate circumstance centres in the fact that although we require all sorts of rural activities conducted to the highest degree possible, there are aspects of current developments that militate against the Australians who are making the sacrifice, and assisting very much people who prior to the war were regarded as hostile to the nation and even during the war are known as enemy aliens. Unless we are very careful we shall see developed a position under which those people will remain uninterrupted and making big money, taking advantage of the oppor-

tunities that present themselves. Dealing as they do in cash, we will have very little prospect of finding out their position in directions that are worthy of consideration. No one would dream of objecting if circumstances necessitated the call-up of manpower from industries, provided that the individuals so called up are, in their new spheres, doing as good a job as they were formerly carrying out. Unfortunately we find that that is not always the position. While it might be unwise to mention the fact at this stage for fear of the information being published in the Press, we know that in Western Australia the enlistments are 60 per cent. more per thousand—these particulars should not appear in the Press—than is disclosed in the aggregate of the other States.

Mr. Sampson: That is amazing.

Mr. Boyle: Do you mean 60 per cent. per thousand or 60 per thousand?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I mean 60 per cent. per thousand. I am referring to enlistments. If, for instance, this State has 250 per thousand, the other States have not more than 140 per thousand. I will illustrate the position in that way, but the figures I have given are not correct. The fact remains that we have 60 per cent. more per thousand than other States and twice as many more per thousand enlistments than the average for Australia. That is a very serious position in a State of such a small population as ours, and where the younger sections of the population are normally engaged in industries that are of such national importance. I refer to the primary industries.

Mr. Boyle: All are short of manpower.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is so.

Mr. Sampson: Our commonsense has not stood up to the difficulties of the position.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We require some assurance on the point that if there is to be any further call-up from any of our industries, especially from industries upon which the Army is dependent, the men so called up will be put into at least as useful an occupation as that from which they will be drawn. Since Japan entered the war certain rural labour of a seasonal character has been extremely difficult to maintain and to manage. Early last March when we had the Benger potato crop to handle and it was suggested that thousands of tons would rot in the ground

because there was no labour available to handle it, we got our organisation to work in order to provide the necessary labour and we had to use alien labour in some districts. At that time we anticipated serious trouble developing in November and December when the summer crop was to be harvested. Had we not anticipated that difficulty, conditions today would be very parlous indeed. I am sorry to say that many people have been anxious to be critical because the other fellow was not doing his job wholly or doing everything that the situation entailed.

As I mentioned the other day, I am confident that in spite of serious and admitted difficulties our 8,000 ton potato crop will be harvested during the next six weeks. If we have regard to the seasonal labour involved in, say, shearing—to which phase the member for Irwin-Moore drew attention early in the special session of this Parliament or in the continuation of the earlier session—members will admit that the labour difficulty was indeed serious. Had we not anticipated that difficulty, we would have been landed in serious trouble.

Mr. Wilson: There is trouble in some parts.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No, because we looked far enough ahead and were able to get 500 shearers out of the Army to cope with the situation.

Mr. Patrick: You took a terribly long time to do it.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, but in war-time we cannot expect things to run as smoothly as in times of peace. When people complain of the time and when they complain that the wool has been chewed off, I reply that we are fortunate in being able to get it off at all, especially when we consider the percentage of enlistments amongst the men in Queensland and abroad who would normally have made up our shearing teams. The position was anticipated, planning was done; we even anticipated zoning for shearing. These steps brought such good results that the clip will be taken off and the wool from Livaringa to Albany will be delivered to the stores. That is an achievement in the face of serious difficulties, but I do not find anybody commenting favourably on the activity or the achievement. On the other hand, I find a very ready desire to criticise if some little

slip occurs in the matter of firewood supplies, shearing needs or potato-digging demands.

Mr. Berry: There has been little complaint about the shearing.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: But if anything had gone wrong, someone would have been smothered. The shearing, however, has been carried out almost according to plan. The lamb-killing industry is a case in point. Six weeks ago, when I set out to get the measure of the total lamb killing, we seemed to be facing an impossible task. We were reaching a stage when, had the winter not been prolonged, there would have been at least 8,000 lambs a day for export by now, and that number could not possibly have been coped with. We spent many hours trying to sort out every avenue from which men might be released. We asked the Army in June last to be prepared to release over 100 men whose names and units were specified, because we knew they could use the knife and were important links in the chain. It took many months to get even half that number released.

Some of the difficulties are easy to understand. Some of the men in the Army receive promotion; they become officers, and it is impossible to get them out of their own volition. Although we secured 50 qualified men, we had finally to ask for volunteers from the Army. It is pleasing to say that, in spite of all those difficulties, the tally at Robb's Jetty exceeds 4,000 lambs a day. We do not hear of these things but, had anything gone wrong, there would have been many complaints. When we consider that from Western Australia, with its limited manpower, 60 per cent. of the male population between the ages of 18 and 45 is in the Forces, it is easy to understand how intense the manpower difficulty has become. The position is indeed serious. It is very necessary to be lenient in our judgment of those who have the responsibility of assembling manpower, and doing the utmost possible to anticipate the needs and meet the difficulties as they arise.

In connection with the flax industry, I expect we shall experience very serious trouble regarding transport. I do not see how it can be avoided. I expect a lot of difficulty in relation to some aspects of the potato and tobacco crops, but I think we shall get through. The formation of district agricultural committees is, I believe, going to help

us considerably. The general experience is that if we place the onus on the person who is going to be affected and allow him to appreciate his responsibility, we are able to obtain much greater assistance from him. During the last few days I received a communication from the Deputy Director of Manpower in this State. Since the formation of that office and the appointment of Mr. Stitfold, we have received considerable assistance in many directions from that office and from that particular officer. He has taken ready action regarding the prevention of enlistments, permanent releases from the Forces, and seasonal releases, and I can only say that by the Department of Labour and National Service and by the Army itself there has been shown an anxiety to meet some of the very difficult situations that have developed from week to week.

The Department of Agriculture suggested to the Army authorities and the Commonwealth Government six months ago a plan that would see us through the very difficult period to be expected between July and Christmas, when various rural industries become so active. We have not got through the harvesting yet and, in some instances, serious hardship must be imposed upon old and young people who are endeavouring to carry on in the absence of the normal employees. The plan suggested was to the effect that the Army should stop any further calling-up for the period as it was unfair to drain our industries of their manpower. We suggested the formation of an army corps of, say, 3,500 men who would be in one special unit and available for agricultural manpower. This, we pointed out, would be preferable to dislocating a number of units by drawing out men of all types for various needs. We suggested that the Chinese labour battalion be left in this State as a reservoir of labour to be drawn upon as required. Unfortunately, this proposal was turned down.

Mr. Doney: What better could the Commonwealth do with the Chinese?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: When the Commonwealth makes decisions, it rarely gives reasons. We suggested that the Civil Construction Corps regulations could be amended to include agricultural labour. There is much agricultural labour amenable to piecework rates—shearing, for instance—and there should not have been much difficulty in that direction. In spite

of the many difficulties that prevail today and the somewhat serious position we must face during the next two or three months, in order to overcome the disability caused by such a drain on our manpower, we need the help of everyone and a certain amount of tolerance to get through. If we can get through, we shall be able to claim that we have achieved much. The Department of National Service is, I think, dealing sympathetically with the serious problem of manpower. Members who have been brought into direct contact with the department will know that it is very anxious to help if the case is a valid one. Unfortunately, some of the cases are not valid. Many difficulties are being experienced by market gardeners. Men have been called up, because of their nationality, by the Allied Works Council, and it seems difficult for that body to appreciate how important it is that those men should remain in avenues of production whose maintenance is vital to every section of the Fighting Forces.

I wish to refer for a few moments to the service being rendered in every industry by young and old. The fact of a few men being manpowered for some industry or other brings me to a point of view to which I desire to give expression. For purposes associated with a certain Commonwealth proposal, Dr. Evatt is making considerable mention of the need to honour promises made to our fighting men. While we acknowledge the need to honour promises, I would like to point out something that I have not heard publicly expressed—how difficult it is going to be to discriminate. I would not for one moment detract from the credit and honour that are due to our heroes in any sphere of war. I would not say anything derogatory of any of them, nor would I in any way deny that the best this country can do for them is the least it can do for them. But I would like to have another aspect examined. Who are to be classed as returned men and returned women in this State? Who are to be those to whom discrimination shall be shown? Would it be those who have fought in any overseas spheres of war bodily? Or would it be those who have volunteered for service on our Home Front?

Mr. Berry: Would it include the returned soldier who had re-entered civil occupation?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: In addition to those who will have returned

to civil occupations from Army service overseas, shall we include those who today are not permitted to wear uniform and are man-powered into industry? What of the numbers who are objected to by the military authorities because of their place in civil life? Are we to say that those who are to receive consideration are merely those who are in some uniform or another, including those whose Army contributions conform to office hours and requirements? Or are we to say that everyone, if this is a common war effort, who is making some contribution to that effort is entitled also to the consideration of this country subsequently?

Mr. Doney: The point, of course, is that one has to draw a line somewhere.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If we have to draw a line somewhere, we must give consideration to those who are keeping industry going, in order to enable the existence of the many who are not permitted to contribute in industry meantime. What of the women who are giving every day, making tremendous sacrifices in their time and in their health by way of free service for this country and the soldiers of it? Are not they, too, to have some consideration? What of the men not in uniform, the men who leave our shores to carry our produce anywhere and everywhere? Not in uniform, but heroes every one of them! I raise that point in no critical way at all, but just to promote some thought on the subject. So, whether it be a shibboleth or not, whether it be a claim or not, there are the cases to be considered of very many people engaged in the war effort of this country who are not in uniform. I would hope that no-one shall be overlooked. I would hope that the best this country can do for its citizens of the future, having full regard for the effort contributed by our heroes in distant spheres, shall also be extended to those who, the country has said, shall not be soldiers in this war of soldiers in uniform. I hope they will not be overlooked, because I hold that whoever the labourer may be, he is worthy of his hire.

I would, too, refer on these Estimates to the oft-repeated phrase of today—the need for post-war reconstruction and rural rehabilitation. In this morning's paper it was noticed that the Commonwealth is likely to obtain the services of a very able gentleman in Mr. Frank Bulcock, of Queensland, as a Director of Commonwealth Agriculture.

Should the Commonwealth get Mr. Bulcock, it will be indeed fortunate. But in addition to making a move for Commonwealth control of agriculture the Commonwealth Government, I understand, is giving consideration to the examination, very completely, of a plan for rural reconstruction. I was asked recently by the Prime Minister to submit some views to assist the Commonwealth Government in the formulation of a plan that might embrace and embody all the difficulties and problems associated with rural reconstruction. My ideas may be crystallised if I read what I consider would be some of the subjects to be referred to a special committee which, I understand, the Commonwealth will appoint to examine, in an Australia-wide sense, the question of rural rehabilitation. I would place them in this order—

(a) Post-war rehabilitation of rural industries where production, marketing or development has been retarded or prejudicially affected by war conditions.

(b) Prospect of economic continuance of rural industries established within Australia during wartime (e.g., flax-growing and treatment), and their adaptation to Australia's peace-time rural economy.

(c) Survey and classification of areas in all States suited to any and all types of production, which are at present entirely unproductive or partially unproductive; this survey, to include land—adjacent to facilities or amenities which is lying idle, whether owned by the Crown or alienated from the Crown.

(d) Classification and measure of all rural crops and industries wherein there is a prospect of expansion and which are suitable for increased production on economic lines in—

(i) exportable commodities;

(ii) commodities suited to both home and export markets;

(iii) commodities suitable for home markets only.

(e) Based on information available from examination of (c) and (d) the prospect of the successful settlement of—

(i) discharged men from all the Services;

(ii) citizens desirous of embarking on a rural life, who have been associated with war work;

(iii) other citizens of Australia;

(iv) migrants;

and the numbers possible of immediate and progressive absorption.

(f) Consequent on (c), (d), and (e), an estimate of finance involved in establishing new settlers, and methods to be applied in affording financial assistance.

(g) Organisation of production and marketing.

(h) Rural betterment.

Included in that list are such involved subjects as rural finance, as rural betterment,

and the making of rural life expansion and production much more attractive than they have been in the past.

Before proceeding with direct notes concerning the Department of Agriculture itself, I wish to refer to a very severe scourge that has made itself evident in Western Australia during the last week or two. I refer to an unfortunate outbreak of a virulent disease in the pig industry which could, if allowed to expand and remain uncontrolled, wipe out our entire pig industry. We have an outbreak of what might prove to be either swine fever, or swine erysipelas, or swine typhoid. Until laboratory tests are completed, during the next four or five days, we shall not know which of those three the disease is; but the suspicion is that the disease is swine fever. If it is swine fever, no piggery that is attacked can be anticipated to experience a loss less great than 100 per cent. There will be total loss. The disease is so virulent that it would be dangerous for any person associated with a clean piggery to walk into an affected one, for he would be almost certain to come out carrying the germs and thereby kill every pig on his own property.

Serious steps have been taken by me during the last 48 hours to deal with the trouble. In the last three days we have lost 300 pigs in the metropolitan area. The disease has spread from Welshpool to Bibra Lake; and when I tell members that the pig population of the metropolitan area—an area 16 miles by 14 miles—equal to the area of Zone 1 under the Dairy Cattle Compensation Regulations, they will understand just what we are facing in the metropolitan area alone. There are 20,000 pigs within that area. Action had to be taken to control sales, transport and movements of pigs generally. I make no apology for having taken very drastic action to prevent the movement of pigs within that area to any point outside of it, or from point to point within it. We have today arranged to slaughter, at 24 hours' notice, every pig in every piggery in which we have found the disease. Should it spread to the 100,000 other pigs in Western Australia, it would wipe out the industry in a very short time.

The disease has not occurred in this State since 1913, and then only a very confined area—near the metropolitan area—was affected. By proper quarantine and destruction we were able to stamp it out. The par-

ticular disease we fear broke out in South Australia, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania in 1927 and 1928 and has not been known in Australia since. At that time it was suspected that it was brought in by frozen pork from overseas. We have a very distinct and definite link showing where this outbreak started. Unfortunately, farmers, whatever they own—a fowl, a pig, or horse or even a guinea pig—are reluctant, should it die, to admit the death. They hide the death in the hope that no other person will discover it. If 20 die the farmer becomes alarmed and buries the lot. We find great difficulty in controlling disease, either technically or clinically, because of the tardiness of owners of stock to report such occurrences.

Unfortunately, in this instance the disease had a few days start of us. We have but a limited veterinary staff, but we have a good one, and last Sunday, when discussing the matter and visiting one or two places with a veterinary officer, I decided to recall every country veterinary officer and tomorrow we will inspect every piggery in the metropolitan area, involving about 20,000 pigs. They have been inspected since Sunday last. I mention this because otherwise all sorts of rumours will be abroad. I repeat that very drastic action has been taken. Certain quarantine regulations will be put into force immediately, and I intend not to permit any relaxation of those very rigid regulations. I am prepared to act with the greatest severity the law will allow against anybody who attempts to evade them. Only by taking such measures can this dreadful scourge be curbed or kept within confined limits. How it happened, where it came from, the reasons for it, I do not intend to explain at the moment; but I am hoping that we can prevent any further spread and reduce our losses, or keep our losses confined within the restricted area in which the disease has manifested itself.

Mr. Doney: With regard to the places you mentioned in South Australia and other States, did the disease never get out of hand? Were the efforts to combat it successful?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It was controlled absolutely by quarantine and slaughter. I intend—depending upon circumstances and if some hurdles can be cleared—to give the House an opportunity to consider a Pig Industry Compensation Bill. I think I have the details fairly well

planned. We should work on a contributory basis such as prevails in Victoria. In that way we can meet not only calamities such as this one, but deaths from any specified disease in the pig industry. I think there should be a contribution provided for on the basis of sales, no matter where they are held, the contribution being 2d. in the pound, that is, 240d. By that means we shall be able to build up a fund of £3,000 or £4,000 a year to cope with an emergency such as this. In Victoria a fund was built up under similar legislation. It amounted to £14,000 in one year.

Mr. Sampson: Similar to our Cattle Compensation Fund?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. However, that is only a forecast; it may not yet eventuate. I wish to deal with a few other matters with which the department is associated. During war-time the activities of the department have to some extent changed. It has had to enter into fields in which it has not been previously engaged and to smooth out many difficulties associated with production.

With regard to eggs, for example, there was a prospect—as those in this Chamber associated with the industry know—late last year of an entire collapse of the egg industry if the Government did not give certain guarantees. The Government did so and therefore it was possible to avoid a prospect of about 5d. per dozen, and instead to fix a price of at least 10d. per dozen for stored eggs for export. Since then there has been a new development in the industry in this State, something for which we have been agitating. An egg treatment plant is now in operation here. I suppose few members in this Chamber know that within half a mile of the building a plant is in operation drying half a ton of egg powder per day. The product is excellent. The industry is likely to be a continuing one, too, not merely a war-time industry. This year we hope to pick up on eggs which we cannot at present export. We expect to get 30,000 or 40,000 cases, for which the farmer will get a suitable price.

As to meat prices, we have been constantly clamouring for recognition of this State's rights and to get the 15 per cent. variation in export parity and home consumption price lifted, thus giving our producers the opportunity to obtain a price commensurate with their effort and with the demand. I am

pleased to say that our efforts have been successful. Insofar as pig products are concerned, we have had the price lifted by 15 per cent. The price for lambs has returned to what it was before the impost was levied. In the case of pigs, it will mean an additional 1d. per lb. for local baconers.

Mr. Boyle: Is that the same in the Eastern States?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, according to fluctuations within the limits of price-fixing. There is not time to deal at any length with such subjects as the wheat industry but, in regard to the Commonwealth's proposals for a drop in our production figures to 13,000,000 bushels, I advise the Committee that I took a very hostile attitude to the suggestion both in and outside the conference room. I say, too, without any feeling of self-aggrandisement, that the basis of compensation of 12s. per acre, which had been suggested initially by an ex-member of the Australian Wheat Board, was one that I vigorously fought for in the interests of this State. It looked at one stage that for the areas thrown out of production we would get no consideration at all.

In regard to dairy products, about the middle of last year we had a very bad patch because of the advice from Great Britain that its requirements for butter had been considerably reduced; and an endeavour was made to have us change over almost entirely from butter to cheese. But we took that very cautiously. We could have caused chaos in the butter and cheese industry if we had precipitately agreed to the Commonwealth proposal, and altered the plan of the dairy industry of this State almost overnight. Various matters of that nature had to be dealt with as the problems approached us. I can only say that, having had the privilege of being Minister for Agriculture longer than has any other person in that office, I am very proud to be associated with the practical men and the technical staff in the various branches of that department.

Mr. Doney: We will give them a clap, too!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: They are rendering a wonderful service to the community and, in regard to the Under Secretary, I think we are very fortunate to have a practical man with a flair for administration in that particular position.

Mr. Sampson: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I know he is jealously regarded by officers and departments in all the other States. In the Press I have dealt with such matters as production goals and what we hope to achieve, and I do not wish to reiterate those statements. I do, however, wish to touch on some items of research. The outbreak of possible swine fever to which I have referred shows that we should not at any stage relax our work in veterinary research, soils research and other activities of that kind. However, we have of necessity had to curtail much of our research programme, though fortunately not all. Otherwise in this State this year we would have had serious outbreaks of such diseases as red water and pleuro, both of which have occurred but have been rigidly controlled and are not worrying us at the moment. Research in connection with mineral deficiencies is continuing, and excellent work is being carried out both in regard to stock and crops.

As I have already mentioned in this Chamber and through the Press, the curtailment of superphosphate supplies cannot be avoided. I do not wish to repeat the figures I have already given except to point out that from the 1939-40 figures of 264,690 tons, which is taken as a base for rationing, we will this year be down to 120,000 tons. The prospect for next year is for a quantity not approaching that. One of our worries is to keep the fertiliser factories moving to ensure deliveries to the country in time. It is a very serious problem and, unless farmers and institutions co-operate with the railways, the position will be very acute before January. We are going to be extremely short of the commodity, speaking in a general sense. I do not wish to prolong the introduction of these Estimates, realising that I have spoken at considerable length.

The Premier: A lot of us would like to hear you prolong it.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: There are probably many subjects upon which members would like information. In reply to questions or to the general debate I will not be just willing, but anxious to supply information to any member requiring it.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 6.26 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 4th November, 1942.

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Criminal Code Amendment (No. 1), 2R., Com., report	1160
Motions: Traffic, St. George's-terrace bus stands, lapsed	1140
Licensing Act, Liquor trading hours	1145, 1151
State civil requirements, to inquire by Select Committee	1162

The **SPEAKER** took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS (3).

POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION.

As to Bunbury Harbour Improvements.

Mr. **WITHERS** asked the Minister for Works: 1, Owing to the need for important works for post-war reconstruction, has he given consideration to the request for plans for an improved Bunbury harbour scheme? 2, If so, are any such plans now in existence; if not, will they be available in the near future? 3, Will the Government give consideration to this work being put in hand when hostilities cease?

The **MINISTER** replied: 1, Yes. 2, Preliminary outline plans only. Further action is held up owing to there being no staff available. 3, Yes.

CIVIL DEFENCE.

Local Authorities and A.R.P. Expenditure.

Mr. **SAMPSON** asked the Minister for Mines: 1, On what basis or understanding is it determined that certain areas are not considered to be vulnerable to enemy intrusion? 2, Is there any precedent or reason to support determination that, while some local authorities receive a refund of half payments made in connection with Civil Defence expenses, in other cases refund is quite unjustified? 3, Will he take steps to ensure that further consideration is given to repayment of 50 per cent. to all local