

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 7th September, 1943.

Address-in-reply, eleventh day PAGE
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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Eleventh Day.

Debate resumed from the 2nd September.

HON. H. L. ROCHE (South-East) [4.34]: I had not intended to speak to the debate on the Address-in-reply this year; but because of some remarks by Mr. Cornell on the railway service provided in my province, it seemed to me, in justice to the members representing that portion of the State, I should inform the House, as well as Mr. Cornell, that the conditions about which he complained are not new. We have had deputations on the matter to the Minister for Railways and there is in the Country Party's office a file which would make extremely interesting reading to the hon. member and which would, I think, show him that the members for that province, both of this and another place, are very much concerned about the state of affairs which he ventilated in this Chamber the other day. It seems to be extraordinarily difficult to find anyone in the Railway Department who is prepared to accept responsibility for the betterment of the service or the conditions under which it is operating.

Whilst the average officer in the service with whom one comes in contact is only too anxious to do his job and has time and again expressed disappointment that improvements in the service cannot be effected, he gets but little encouragement from those in higher administrative positions. Obstacles always seem to be present which militate against any marked improvement. A similar state of affairs seems to be developing in regard to what I consider to be one of the most profitable ventures the Railway Department has ever undertaken. I refer to the Kojonup bus service. Here, again, no-one in authority seems to be primarily charged with the responsibility for that service. The two men who have been driving the buses have been exceptional and the

good repute in which they are held by the passengers patronising that service is something of which the Railway administration should take heed. The department might also pay a little more attention to that service and to the convenience of the passengers, as well as to the facilities that are at present afforded for the continuance of that service. The maintenance of the buses themselves is, so far as I can ascertain, a matter of divided control as between the Tramways and the Railways. Some strange happenings appear to be taking place in connection with one of the buses which, owing to a fault that developed in the engine, had to be sent to the Eastern States for repairs.

Hon. A. Thomson: That is a reflection on our own department.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: Time and again the service is overcrowded to the point of suffocation. One bus is licensed to carry 28 passengers and the other 32; but they leave Perth with as many as 40 and 50 passengers. No effort has been made to supplement the service in any way or to provide additional facilities for peak loading. The drivers are expected to carry on their work with equipment that can only be described as ridiculous. They have a hand-jack to lift buses of that size to repair a puncture, instead of being provided with one of the latest hydraulic jacks. They have a hand pump which, with the assistance of relays of passengers, will pump 10 lbs. of air into a tyre in 30 minutes. It all comes back to the question of the administration of the Railways and the difficulty is to deal with anyone in authority who will accept responsibility in such matters. There is another point upon which possibly we may be able to obtain enlightenment. It is whether the buses themselves are altogether suitable for the traffic or whether the bodies, which perhaps are quite suitable in the metropolitan area, are suitable for the work in which the vehicles are engaged.

Another matter exercising my mind is the manpower position of Western Australia. I would like the State Government to take a very much more prominent and active part in this problem. We have now reached the stage where food production is bulking largely in Australia's war effort. That will possibly continue into the post-war years. We find, however, that the rural industries have been denuded of young men and women to such an extent that I feel grave

doubts as to whether we shall be able to accelerate, in any marked degree, the production of foodstuffs that are most urgently required. In taking a more realistic view of the war position and the demands made on Australia, and what is proposed for Australia, I think that a greater effort should be made to obtain the release of men for work in the rural industries. Particularly do I refer to "B" class men and those whom the Army, apparently, has decided are too old for front line fighting in the Islands, namely, men over 30 years of age. Although men beyond that age are accepted only in rare instances for front line units, the Army authorities, or the officials in charge of depots and camps, show marked reluctance in allowing any men to be released for service in what has become much more essential than the duties they are performing—where they have any duties—in the bases and depots about the metropolitan area.

I must confess that for the first two years of the war I was disposed to agree that every man who could shoulder a rifle should be in the Army. But such is the waste of manpower and the extravagance of the Army and lack of any definite occupation for so many of these men—and, I might add, for the young women, too, who have enlisted—that today I think we are fully justified in doing everything we can to have such men returned to industry, where there is a reasonable case, and where their services can be employed much more usefully for Australia than in fulfilling their present duties. The major occupation of many of them seems to be the wearing out of the seats of their trousers. The position in the country is not altogether healthy. Whilst price levels for farm products have been considerably increased in most sections, the maintenance of properties, so necessary for future production, is falling grievously into arrears; in fact to such an extent is this so that before the war ends we shall be faced with another major problem. While farmers and producers generally are receiving better prices for their products, and more money is changing hands so that they have, in the main, more spending power, it is impossible for them to obtain labour to attend to even essential maintenance, let alone to proceed with development. In addition, where those who are established are making a reasonable income, taxation is taking so much from them that they will not be able to

accumulate reserves to enable them to press on with the maintenance if, and when, labour becomes available at the end of the war. The debt structure throughout the farming districts remains much the same. The State Government seems to have set its face adamantly against any action to provide a worthwhile means of rehabilitating the industry as a whole, and so restoring to the people concerned some of the confidence that has been destroyed.

The attitude of the State is to leave everything to the Commonwealth Government. The Federal Minister for Commerce, Mr. Scully, in a letter to a member of the Western Australian Parliament in another place, stated that, in his opinion, the question of reviewing the debt position of the farmer was one for the State Government. So we find the poor unfortunate farmer in the position of a grain of wheat between two millstones. He is receiving very little consideration. At the moment there may not be a great amount of publicity given to his position because the return for his product is greater than it has been and he has a little more money to spend than previously, but the fundamental basis of his position still remains the same, and it is essentially unsound. The Commonwealth Mortgage Bank will not help the people to whom I refer because their indebtedness is such that that bank is not likely to take them on. That institution will be of benefit to the people who are now in a sound position, inasmuch as they will get the advantage of the lower rates of interest provided in that legislation under which the Mortgage Bank is being established. The Parliament and the people of this State should understand that farming in Western Australia is no longer an avocation that a man can undertake in the certain knowledge that with hard work and thrift he may accumulate a reasonable competence. That day has passed! Farming has become a mode of life for those who like it. Farming means a lot to this country, and if we want people to adopt that avocation, we shall have to see that the conditions under which they live are improved out of all recognition compared with those under which many thousands have been, and still are, labouring.

The manpower position is the most urgent problem we have to deal with at the moment, not only in respect of farming but also as it affects the services available to the

country people and those who are forced to do business in our country towns. Particularly do I refer to the difficulties experienced in staffing country hotels. I do not mean for the supply of liquor, but for the provision of meals and accommodation. It has in some country towns become extraordinarily difficult to obtain accommodation. Further, country garages which in the main are providing services for people in essential industry and in business, such as butchers, have not been given much consideration in respect of manpower. With the present war outlook, greater consideration should be given to them when men over 30 years of age or in the "B" class are applied for. Western Australia is unfortunate in the way its young men have been called up. In the matter of young manpower, this State has been cut to the bone, and many of our men have been used to reinforce Eastern States units because those States have not found their quotas. The State Government should take up matters of this sort with the Federal authorities.

Hon. T. Moore: What authority have you for making that statement?

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: My knowledge of the position and the statement made by the Premier in another place last session. For the hon. member's information, I will look up the statement in "Hansard." It is extraordinary what power has been conferred upon or assumed by many of the little Jacks-in-office who have been placed in positions of real authority in this State. If they are subject to anybody it is to someone in Canberra, 3,000 miles away, who does not seem to be greatly interested in our affairs. On this point I should like to quote from a leading article in the Katanning paper of the 10th July, which is illuminating. It reads—

Not so long ago an officer of one of the Women's Auxiliary Services paid a recruiting visit to Katanning. She put up at the leading hotel in the town and enjoyed to the full all the amenities offered by the well-conducted, well-equipped establishment. She had meals in a well-appointed dining room, slept in a comfortable, well-furnished bedroom and sat down in the comfortably padded chairs in a cheery well-kept lounge. But she took great exception to other people enjoying the same amenities. The folk coming into the lounge for a few minutes' chat with their friends and a drink (no whisky-sodas here) she classified as "wasters" and the diners she called "slackers," her one constantly reiterated phrase being that "you don't know there is a war on." The girls employed on

the staff of the hotel she said, had no right to be doing such work "when their country needed them," and she did her best to get them to leave in a bunch for more or less unspecified war work.

When she returned to Perth, she informed a city paper that she had been disappointed with results obtained at Katanning. Presumably she also was disappointed with the attitude of Katanning folk towards the war. So ill-informed was this officer, so ignorant of what Katanning and the surrounding districts had contributed to the war effort, that she could see no further than the surface of things. It is safe to say that during her stay in Katanning she did not contact one person upon whom the war had not impinged heavily. The record of the district in enlistments, in contributions to war loans and in patriotic efforts has not been surpassed, in this State at least, per head of population. Yet an accredited officer of the Women's Army Services has the presumption to tell us that "We don't know there is a war on."

Hon. A. Thomson: She was sent down by the manpower officials.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I do not know that, but I do know that this is typical of many of these people. They seem to have very considerable authority.

Hon. T. Moore: And a lot of bluff.

Hon. J. Cornell: That is more like it.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: And they are getting away with it. The fact of their being in these positions and apparently subject to no-one who has much concern for the State impels me to emphasise the point that the State Government might do something to protect Western Australia in its dealings with the Federal authorities.

This brings to mind the position that obtains regarding butter rationing in some areas not usually regarded as dairying districts. Before rationing was commenced, a considerable quantity of farm butter was made for local consumption. Much of it was sent to Perth, where it was either re-processed or sold for pastry-making. Under the rationing regulations, farm butter may not be sold unless coupons are surrendered for it, just as for factory butter. Owing to the former not having as good keeping properties as factory butter—and often the flavour is not equal to that of the factory product—people will not give coupons for farm butter. I know of two instances in my immediate neighbourhood where stores are buying more factory butter than they were before rationing was introduced, in spite of the fact that the quantity allowed to the individual has been rationed.

Hon. A. Thomson: That applies all through the country.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: People in Canberra draw up these petty regulations without having much practical knowledge to guide them and without there being anybody to gainsay them or to point out some of their stupidities. It should not be impossible for those in authority to provide that farm butter may still be accepted at country stores and sent to Perth for processing. The stores might, and probably would, pay a somewhat lower price for it. Many farmers' wives make a few pounds of butter each week and have been in the habit of selling it to neighbours or to the local store. There is not enough to justify their sending it to a factory in the form of cream; in fact, it would take many of them a week or more to fill a cream can, and then they would be confronted with transport difficulties. If the small farm producing three or five lbs. of farm butter a week could be exempted from the coupon regulation or allowed to sell it to the country stores in quantities up to, say, 12 or 15 lbs. a week, it should be allowed to do so. Perhaps the store would have to be licensed and the butter would be sent to a factory for processing. If this were done the Commonwealth might succeed in conserving supplies of factory butter instead of, as the regulations are doing, forcing people to use factory butter—the very commodity the consumption of which the authorities wish to reduce in order to have larger quantities available for export.

The flax industry is one that invites some attention. For a time the State department seemed to have some say in the matter and I believe the Minister for Agriculture interested himself considerably. Lately, he has had other duties to attend to. Still, I wonder whether he is in a position to exert any influence over what is occurring. Handling costs and costs generally after the flax leaves the farmer seem to be so heavy and loaded so unnecessarily that the fibre must be extraordinarily expensive by the time it reaches the retting stage. I see no hope of preserving much of that industry in the post-war period unless these costs can be very much reduced. I do not know the figure regarding the retted straw but I understand the price runs into something like £100 a ton. The farmer receives £8 a ton. If the Commonwealth Government is sincere—I am sure the State department is sincere in

its hope that the industry may become firmly established in this State—it behoves it to look into the extravagance that is taking place in the handling of that commodity. This is another instance of the indifference or ineptitude of the Federal administration as it applies in this State.

There is a further illustration just as obvious to those who are brought into contact with it, namely, the Supply and Shipping Department. That department seems to be clothed with absolute power, which in certain respects is delegated to officials we have never heard of before. Whether they are a part of the Federal service or have been found around the place and put into these jobs, I cannot say, but I do think the exercise of that power—apparently without any control or little if any supervision—by officials of that kind, is not satisfactory. True, there is a Minister in Canberra, but I am afraid he is too far away to exercise much supervision over what takes place in Western Australia. Almost everything seems to be coming under the control of that department in the way of essential supplies. I can see growing difficulties and confusion unless a more local and practical viewpoint can be adopted in the administration of that department. At the same time I think we might expect that some of the stocks held by the Army—I believe the stocks run into huge totals in some cases—might on occasions be made available for the carrying on and maintenance of essential industries in this State.

The same lack of appreciation of our position here is, I think, manifest and will become more manifest in the future in regard to meat rationing. Admittedly beef and pork are in short supply. Some control is necessary to ensure supplies being maintained for our Services and the Allied Services in Australia. In regard to mutton supplies, it seems to me that while the producer is being prejudiced the consumer is being exploited. The regulations so far as they go only fix the selling price for mutton in a period of scarcity, and whilst they limit the return to the producer, who is under considerable additional expense to maintain stock in fat condition during the difficult period of the year, they do little to protect the consumer. The position at the moment is that whilst good mutton has been selling at the Midland Junction saleyards at about 3d. per lb. on the hoof, I understand there has been

very little difference in the price charged to the consumer. A more realistic approach to this position by those in control might effect considerable improvement, with greater justice to the producer and greater protection to the consumer.

Of all war-time departments that we have experience of in this State, I think it is only fair to say that the Liquid Fuel Board has been the most outstanding in the measure of its success in the rationing of petrol and in dealing with all the claims made upon it for reconsideration. Of all the claims I have submitted, only on two occasions has the board refused further consideration, and I think it was entirely justified in its action. The Manpower Office has now become a little more realistic, and realises that Western Australian industry has been stripped of manpower to a dangerous degree, and that a more tolerant and considerate attitude must be adopted in the future. It would seem from a statement by the Prime Minister, which appeared in "The West Australian" on the 26th July last, when he envisaged Australia's part in the future land fighting in the Pacific, that we have some justification for expecting a considerable degree of leniency in regard to manpower. Mr. Curtin is reported to have expressed the belief that—

When General MacArthur was in a position to assume the offensive he would move forward with an Allied expeditionary force. Up to the limits of the area defined in the Militia Act this could include the whole of the Australian naval, land and air forces. He assumed however that General MacArthur would reassign to the Australian Government and its service commanders responsibility for the defence of his main base, which was Australia. His line of communication areas represented by reconquered territories would also require to be protected. Considerable forces would be required for these purposes. By the time Australia had made the maximum contribution of which it was capable to the Allied expeditionary force for protection of base and line of communication areas and had also replaced its casualties it would have stretched its capacity to the utmost.

I submit that if these are to be the future activities of the Australian Forces, we are justified in asking that a more tolerant view be taken of the manpower position in Western Australia, and that applications for "B" class men and for men over 30 years of age be given more favourable consideration by the Manpower Office, and that, if necessary, the department be clothed with sufficient authority to demand the release of men for

civilian industry in order to maintain the essential services and essential industries of Western Australia. I suppose that on the Address-in-reply debate we all feel that our remarks are incomplete without some reference to post-war reconstruction and post-war planning, or the happy world we all hope for when hostilities cease. I am very much afraid that the selfish materialism which characterises so much of our daily lives and activities is likely to militate very considerably against the establishment of a new order. What we need is a community spirit and a more charitable understanding of each other and of the other fellow's problems. I do not believe we can build a better world as it will affect this community unless we have more of that community spirit and better understanding.

Over the last 30 or 40 years there seems to have developed a selfish outlook amongst us all. Possibly it is our fault as a people that during that period we have tried—I think with justification—to improve the conditions and the position of the people through various social services such as old age pensions, hospital treatment and so forth. We have taught our people to expect these things because of the mere accident of birth in this country, but we have forgotten to teach them that they owe a responsibility to the State itself or the community as a whole. It seems to me that the only way in which we can build for the future is to get away from that selfish outlook, and the place to start is in our educational system. I was very pleased to notice that the Government propose to increase the school leaving age to 15. I should like it increased to 18. No doubt there will be great difficulties and a tremendous expense involved in that, but I remind members that we are not leading the world in respect to education at the present time. In the matter of school leaving age we are lagging behind. In the United States, of 48 States, 41 have a school leaving age of 16 or over. Although I prefer, perhaps, the type of people we have in this country to some of the types I have seen amongst our Allies, it has struck me that they do seem almost invariably to be well-informed on many subjects concerning which, I am afraid, our youngsters on leaving school have only a scanty knowledge.

As the future of this community is going to depend on its youth, our schools should

devote more time than they do to inculcating into youth a sense of public responsibility. Young people should be taught that whereas the community owes something to the individual, the individual owes something to the community. If we can develop that outlook we may go ahead. From what little I have been able to learn of the conditions in Russia, it seems to me that socialisation there is largely based on the service of the individual to the community and the individual gains by the services that the community provides for him. I think that some of those people who are never tired of telling us of the advantages of the Russian system, overlook that fact. So far as my limited reading goes, the prime essential in Russia is that the individual must develop a sense of responsibility and also that everyone must work. If the trained worker or the man who is holding a good job cannot, or does not, do the job properly, he is found one not so good; and that continues until he reaches his own level. A little of that in this country would be a good thing.

We are committed to the development of industries in Australia, but I wonder somewhat whether we are not over-emphasising the industrialisation of this country. Certain industries we need and should have. What might be described as natural industries should be fostered and helped to a reasonable extent. But having seen examples of the population of big industrial centres—particularly some of those that are in this country at present—it appears to me that we have not much to gain, from the point of view of building a better race, through the over-industrialisation of this country and its people. We might well give some thought to developing and settling still further our rural and mining areas where, I say without question—and I think the statement defies contradiction—the best type of Australian is produced under healthy conditions and with a healthy outlook. Immigration may solve our problems to some extent; it may meet the need for greater population. But I trust that future immigrants will not largely comprise people from Southern European countries.

Already in this State we are facing the establishment of what are almost self-contained foreign communities. We can perceive from some of the Allied service men who are in this country, that the infusion of Southern European blood into their

countries has hardly been a marked advantage to the race. Perhaps in another 100 years they will be bred out. More likely they will breed more of the characteristics of Southern Europe into the rest of the population in their homeland. For my part I would sooner face the prospect of having in another 25 years' time 9,000,000 or 10,000,000 people in this country of the same kith and kin, of the same blood and outlook as those now here than the prospect of having 10,000,000 to 15,000,000 people of a hotch-potch mixture in which all the worst seems to come out and in which many of those characteristics we prize in the British race seem in danger of being lost. It is a difficult matter for us to face the problems that are likely to be presented to us after the war.

Unfortunately successive Commonwealth Governments have seemed only too anxious to leave the State Parliaments and State Administrations entirely out of their proposals, which seem to be kept a dark secret. As far as administration is concerned, Commonwealth Governments have seemed to want to concentrate everything on the eastern side of the Continent. We all look forward to a new order but it does not seem to me—and it has never seemed to me—that we will get out of this upheaval the sort of new order handed to us on a plate which many people seem to expect—a new order under which, without any effort on their part, they are going to have everything thrown into their laps and under which they are going to live in conditions which, by comparison, will make the Kingdom of Heaven appear like a slum area. Anything we get, we shall have to work and strive for and, as I said earlier, the best start we can make is by teaching the youth in our schools today to look forward to accepting in later life some responsibility for designing and helping to shape the future of this country.

HON. F. R. WELSH (North): There is one item in the Speech upon which I would like to comment—

Despite the difficult and hazardous conditions under which the citizens of the North-West are living, their production of beef, wool and minerals compared favourably with that of pre-war years.

That is so. I would like to point out some of the difficulties under which those people are living. They are without many of the

amenities of life enjoyed by people in the southern portions of the State. That condition of affairs prevails in normal times. Under war conditions, they find it difficult to obtain the essentials of life and are having a pretty hard time. I think Mr. W. R. Hall mentioned that the people in the Laverton district were suffering the same disabilities. Transport difficulties are acute in the North-West, as in other outback areas of Western Australia. I was anything but amused the other day when, in trying to obtain some requirements for people in the North, I was asked by two persons in two different firms whether I thought some of the people outback, and particularly in the North-West, understood there was a war on. I maintain that if anybody understands there is a war on, it is the people outback and not those associated with city firms.

In the North-West, the residents are suffering from shortages of quite a number of commodities. Owing to blow-fly trouble, pastoralists have had to do extra work over and above what was necessary in previous years. The manpower problem is very acute. Indeed it is beyond the acute stage up North, and is becoming dangerous. It is difficult for those people to carry on. Additional labour is required to combat the blow-fly menace if the flocks are to be saved, but labour is not available. In view of the fact that the Prime Minister has made a statement that the danger of invasion of Australia has passed, I am hoping we shall be able to secure the release of some servicemen to assist important industries that are so short of labour. Many commodities needed by people in the North-West, such as jetting plants, for instance, have been unobtainable because they have been shut out by the Eastern States. I do not blame the State Government for this. The Minister for Lands has been more than helpful in endeavouring to overcome this difficulty by obtaining the release of essential commodities from the Eastern States and securing shipping space. Some relief has been given, and the people are grateful. But such things should not happen.

We are suffering from a shortage of horse-shoes. It would not be possible to buy a hundredweight in Western Australia today. There is no station in the North or anywhere else in Australia that can carry on without horse-shoes. Horses cannot be worked without being shod. Surely there is someone in

control at Canberra with some understanding of the requirements of the outback portion of Australia! We are having a very raw deal in this State. I think members would be interested to know whether some of the departments at Canberra are shorthanded. I doubt it. I think it might be proved that they are over-staffed. Surely there should be somebody there with enough direct or practical knowledge of the outback of Western Australia to see that such things as have occurred do not happen again. Our leading industries are in the balance; in fact, they are losing ground because essential requirements are unobtainable. I am not referring to food.

In Australia we have been very fortunate in not having to endure the hardships faced by other countries but which would have been our lot had the Japanese invaded Australia. However, the disadvantages to which I have referred should be removed by some responsible Minister in Canberra. The State Government cannot do everything. It has been very good to us. The Minister for Lands has been especially helpful in endeavouring to have essential commodities released. In all the circumstances, one becomes annoyed when asked whether the people of the North-West are aware there is a war on. I was glad the other night to hear Mr. Cornish speak about the shipping service in the North which today is very slender. That is not to be wondered at, considering the shortage of ships but, as Mr. Cornish pointed out, after the war quite a number of vessels now being built may be a distinct advantage because of their lighter draught, if used to transport wool from and essential goods to North-West ports.

Hon. C. B. Williams: I do not think they will be sold this time, as happened after the last war.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The "Kangaroo" would be very handy now.

Hon. F. R. WELSH: The "Kybra" would be still more handy. The mining industry is quite active in the North-West. There are the deposits of tantalite at Pilbara, blue asbestos at Roebourne and mica in the Gascoyne, in addition to the goldmining industry at Marble Bar. The Commonwealth has sent men to investigate and work strategic minerals, such as tantalite, mica and blue asbestos. I think that at Marble Bar we have one of the best gold mines in Western Australia.

Hon. C. B. Williams: What did you say?

Hon. F. R. WELSH: I mean, of course, outside Kalgoorlie.

Hon. C. B. Williams: That is all right!

Hon. F. R. WELSH: I do not put this mine in the same category as those on the Golden Mile. If the mine develops as anticipated, I believe that when the war is over it will prove to be one of the best revenue-producing propositions in Western Australia. In addition to that, success with the venture will mean the opening up of a great many other similar types of shows. In post-war reconstruction, quite a lot could be done in the development of the fishing industry. Our North-Western waters teem with fish and, if the industry were developed, supplies could be brought down south, which would rectify the present absurd and scandalous price that has to be paid for fish in the metropolitan area.

The banana-growing industry at Carnarvon is flourishing. The growers experienced troublous times during the drought periods and later on, when the floods washed most of the plantations away; but, despite these two deterrent factors, the industry still made good. In the Carnarvon area some of the best vegetables I have ever seen were grown in profusion. Given quicker and cheaper transport in post-war years, there should be no vegetable shortage in the southern parts, and if arrangements could be made for shipments now, the present shortage could be overcome. I notice that top prices are being paid for inferior produce, and if this particular industry were encouraged in the North-West, Carnarvon could supply a lot of the vegetables required. The points I have mentioned should receive the consideration of the Government. As I mentioned earlier, it makes Nor'-Westers irritable when they are reminded, should they mention some of these disabilities, that there is a war on. I am satisfied that the people of the back blocks appreciate to a greater degree than those residing in the city areas that the war is in progress.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East): I cannot refrain from referring to the great surprise we all experienced when the result of the recent Federal elections was announced. To me it came as a real shock, and I do not mind acknowledging the fact. I feel that, as a result of that election—

Hon. T. Moore: Everything is all right!

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: No, for it brought home to us the dangers that lie ahead. In recent times we have experienced a tremendous revolution in the system of government in Australia. It has departed from conditions to which we have been accustomed over many years. There has been imposed upon us a system of bureaucratic control to which few of us take very kindly. I fear that we shall experience much more of it. Sincerely do I hope that the forthcoming State elections, to which reference is made in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech, will not provide us with a repetition of our surprise in the Federal polling. Experience has taught us the effect of government by regulations as a result of which many of us wonder what we shall have to face in the future from that standpoint.

No-one seems to be directly responsible for the position that arises, and it is difficult to know from day to day what avenue of activity can be embarked upon successfully. Mr. Roche and others have referred to the regulations dealing with the price of meat and the control of pig-meats in particular. I assume that there is some reason behind it all, but the position is not at all satisfactory for the producers. Under those irritating regulations, some growers have been forced out of business. Some time ago they embarked upon the production of the larger type of pig for which they had been promised good prices. Then it was decided by someone that that type of pig was not wanted. That was about 12 months ago. As a result of the reversed decision, the growers ceased producing that type of pig and, in fact, most of them got out of the industry altogether. Then very speedily those in authority discovered that by the issuing of their edict, production had been upset, so they immediately changed their attitude and, in order to encourage the growing of that particular type, offered good prices for pig-meat.

Now they are at it again, issuing regulation after regulation and telling the growers that they must produce the large type of pigs. I am not sure that many growers will place themselves in a position to be caught again. In fact, I know many are not inclined to do so at all. They resent what has happened in the past, as a result of which a good many people have been making money behind the scenes. I presume that has happened, because, when the edict was

issued, our growers had to get rid of the large pigs, which were bought up by people who probably had some inside information. Evidently that is what occurred, for I am assured that the big pigs were sent to the Eastern States and those who purchased them made big money on the transaction. However, the growers are being encouraged once more to grow big pigs. I sincerely trust that if they do so, it will mean that they will be able to export the carcasses to England and Europe, where large quantities of pork are required.

The responsibility for what has happened in the past is not apparently accepted by the Minister, and it seems it was some other authority that made the mistake. I also agree with Mr. Roche's remarks regarding the humbugging the producers have experienced regarding the production of farm butter. We know that Great Britain requires all the butter that we can export. Recently the ultimatum was issued that coupons had to be surrendered for farm butter as well as for factory butter, with the result that many storekeepers in country districts refused to buy supplies of the former. That meant that farmers accustomed to making supplies for sale locally were deprived of that opportunity to make some additional money. The farmers were not in a position to buy cans and to send cream to the factories. Some did, but they were disappointed with the results and they could not secure the return of their cans.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: That was not the main difficulty, which was that their cream was graded as second-class.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I am aware of that fact. In consequence of all this, the production of farm butter has dropped from about 250,000 lbs. to 1,000 lbs., and it seems to me most extraordinary that the farmers should be robbed of this means of making a little ready cash. Now the authorities have changed their minds and are endeavouring to encourage the production of farm butter, but the producers have let their cows run at random, go dry or have disposed of them. In the circumstances many of them do not intend to go in for the production of farm butter. Many are not in a position to do so and certainly cannot send any cream to the factories.

Dealing with the subject of education, I am heartily in favour of raising the school leaving age to 15 years. I would like the

age to be 16 years, but I doubt if we could overcome the difficulties that would arise. We know that in many instances young people have had to leave school at an early age to earn their own living and to help keep the family pot boiling. While that may not have been of advantage in some instances, in many others the young people received training that proved of great value to them in after life. I have met many men who commenced earning their own living when they were 14 or 15 years of age and have made a far greater success of life than have others who had the benefit of a higher education. In many instances some of the latter proved utter failures. I am convinced that in many cases it has been a good thing for the people that they started work at an early age.

Hon. J. Cornell: Some learnt to write too well, and that proved their undoing.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Some may have gained education quite on wrong lines. My personal belief is that in the country districts a great deal more could be done by the Education Department in furthering the system of rural schools. In a country like this, which seeks to encourage primary industry in mining, agriculture, and other directions alike, that is a type of education which should be encouraged. With the schooling should be incorporated some system of tuition in defence. I refer to a system such as that introduced by a Labour Government in years gone by, and then discarded by a Labour Government at the very first opportunity by doing away with the military training of our young people. I consider that step responsible for much of the trouble we see in every centre, the youth of the country being so utterly irresponsible and so very destructive. They seem to run away with themselves, to be seized by a spirit inducing them to damage all they can. In the country districts even youths under military authority do enormous damage. Officers seem to feel no responsibility to try to stop it, nor is there any attempt to pay for damage done.

Hon. J. Cornell: The Commonwealth repudiates responsibility.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Yes. We have to insure our properties and interests in various ways, but no compensation can be obtained except for damage to which one can attach the name, or names, of the man, or men, who did it. Of course one does not,

in most cases, know the man from a bar of soap. Many of these youths could have been released for work in such directions as assisting their parents on their properties, the youths themselves being available for military service of any kind in the event of an emergency. Men in camp themselves say that they are doing little except answering the roll call, and that they spend the rest of their time playing cards and two-up. I know that throughout a whole district that was the position. Officers can see it going on all the time. Officers may be present when one sees these youths pulling down a gate-way to use it up for firewood. These young people, if they see a sheet of glass, want to put their feet through it, simply to see it smashed. They are youngsters bubbling over with high spirits, but they lack that control which would have been imparted to them if they had had strict teaching before they left their schools, if they had got proper training instead of the training that they actually received.

Hon. T. Moore: Or boy scout training.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Yes. That, however, is perhaps too voluntary. The youths should be under strict control. It has been said that the Government is about to embark on post-war reconstruction water schemes. I am pleased to learn it has been hinted by the Minister for Works that the Government will not impose such high rates as have been charged in the past. I know that this country lacks water in every direction: and any such scheme would be quite all right provided it did not overload the land with pecuniary charges which are unfair to the people on the land. The charges are high owing to costs created by the policy of encouragement of secondary industries in Australia.

In connection with water supplies the cost of the pipes is altogether too high. So also is the laying down of the pipes and putting them in by people who perhaps do not work too hard, people who resort to what used to be called the "Government stroke." Past water schemes have proved altogether too costly, the unfortunate man on the land being required to carry the load. Farmers struggled to pay their water rates, but could not. The Legislative Council has always been anxious enough to develop the country so as to make the railways and harbours more profitable and enable them to assist more largely towards the payment of over-

sea debts. By the way, there is a mighty load of that debt looming ahead of us. Again, there is the high cost of farming machinery, which overloads the settlers.

With regard to education, there is one point I wish to emphasise—the difficulties that are experienced by our Historical Society. That society has been most anxious to collect all possible data. In connection with Western Australian education there is urgent need for a properly constituted archives board, and a trained archivist should be appointed to carry on the work which the Historical Society has been struggling to do with voluntary helpers. The society has not the necessary room for the large quantity of material it has collected. Many people visit the society's premises to make use of that material. Our University is especially interested in this work, and so are our schools, apart from outside people who frequently write for information. The matter has been mentioned to the Premier, who has shown himself very sympathetic and strongly inclined to do something. People in the outside world eagerly inquire after the data available here. It is highly important to Western Australia to continue securing all information possible from persons who can give it regarding the early period of Western Australia's history. Unfortunately a great many of the records have been lost. Government departments have quantities and quantities of highly valuable information; but, as can easily be understood those departments do not at present wish to part with that information. They would be prepared to part with it to trained archivists and others who understand the work, thanks to having been trained as in New South Wales and South Australia, where private bequests have made it possible. Here, however, there is no encouragement for people to make such bequests. That encouragement would probably be forthcoming if these activities were brought under legislative enactment.

I personally know of important and valuable data that have been destroyed by fire. Much more of such material will go into the cleaning-up fires that often take place in departments. It is the business of no one in particular to collect this information. The small funds of the Historical Society prevent it from having anyone actively engaged on the work but a secretary, who is

an honorary officer but a most admirable man for the position. Still, the correspondence that reaches him from important institutions all over the world calls for a great deal of effort to keep pace with it; and, constituted as the society is now, recipients would feel that the information they received from it does not carry the authority it should. I hope, therefore, that the Chief Secretary will be able to give me encouragement to believe that the Government, even in this late hour of Western Australia's responsible government, will do something more. There being a surplus of revenue this year, I thought no time was better than the present to mention the subject with a view to obtaining some monetary assistance. I do not wish to delay the House further. I have the greatest pleasure in supporting the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.2 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 7th September, 1943.

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

QUESTION—PETROL.

As to Trafficking in Ration Tickets.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Justice: 1, Whether he read the report of police court proceedings in "The West Australian" on the 12th August, and previous issue in connection with the ninth prosecution associated with the alleged traf-

ficking in Government-endorsed ration petrol tickets, in which statements were made by counsel—"We have never been favoured with the information in all these petrol cases as to the source of the tickets. I have been curious to know where the huge mass of tickets came from"; and again, "That it was the subsidiaries who had been brought to book. The ends of justice had not been served because the real offenders had not been apprehended, and were not likely to be; only the minor offenders had suffered?" 2, Whether, in view of public concern on these extraordinary cases, he will give to the House an explanation as to how Government tickets got outside Government control? 3, Has the officer responsible for loose handling of Government property been adequately punished?

The MINISTER replied: 1, Yes. 2, This has not been determined notwithstanding lengthy and exhaustive investigations by National Security officials. Government-endorsed petrol tickets are issued to a large number of Government officials and also to numerous private individuals whose vehicles are under hire by various Government departments, many of which vehicles are located in remote parts of the State. 3, The department has now been definitely advised by the Commonwealth authorities that no evidence could be obtained which would warrant criminal proceedings against any Government official or person receiving petrol tickets from the Government. The question as to whether any other action should be taken by the department is under consideration.

BILL—WORKERS' HOMES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER [4.37] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of the Bill is to amend the Workers' Homes Act to give additional powers to the Workers' Homes Board. The measure is a small one and can be easily explained. Its provisions are as follows:—

(1) To give the board power to use its funds for the erection of houses to be let on weekly tenancies to persons who are "workers" within the meaning of the Act.

(2) To enable a tenant if he so desires to purchase the house which he is renting from the board.

(3) To require the board to keep the financial operations of the letting section of its activities in a separate account from its other financial operations.