

mentioned the other night that because of the extreme difficulty in finding money for schools and playing fields, the Commonwealth Government should be compelled to take over education in Western Australia. Certainly we shall have to find a great deal more money to provide the facilities I have mentioned. I am only one member of 50 in this Chamber; but I suppose that what I have said in respect of schools can be said with equal force of most of the other schools in the State.

Mr. McLarty: They are probably worse.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: The department has done its best with the money at its disposal and the vote has been increasing from year to year. The Treasurer has made much more money available for education now than was made available in past years.

The CHAIRMAN: I remind the hon. member that this is not the Education Vote. We are discussing the Public Works Vote.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: I bow to your ruling, Sir. As the hour is late and I have no desire to tire members with a narration of the needs of Middle Swan, I will raise these matters subsequently. I hope the Minister will take notice of the many proposals I have brought before the Committee.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Friday, 1st October, 1943.

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

BILL—MOTOR VEHICLE (THIRD PARTY INSURANCE).

Recommendation.

On motion by the Minister for Works, Bill recommitted for the purpose of further considering Clauses 5 and 6.

In Committee.

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

Clause 5—Applications by persons to become approved insurers:

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have an explanation to make regarding the effect of Subclauses 4 and 5. These deal with the proviso that should an insurer—that is, an insurance company—desire to withdraw from this class of insurance business, it must give three months' notice of its intention. I conferred with the Leader of the Opposition regarding this matter, and pointed out to him that in other States the period of three months has operated satisfactorily. It is merely a matter of arrangement between the insuring companies themselves. If 90 companies were participating in the business and one withdrew, the remaining 89 companies would have to carry the liability associated with the hit-and-run motorist, uninsured motorists and so forth. That would be done out of the pool in which all the companies participate. I understand that, in consequence of the explanation I was able to make, the Leader of the Opposition does not wish to press for an amendment. If he desires to go on with it, I shall not raise much objection. The provision in the Bill will make our legislation uniform with that operating elsewhere.

Mr. WATTS: The Minister was good enough to discuss the matter with me and he has cleared up the point about which I was concerned. In the circumstances I shall not proceed with any amendment. I was under the impression that the proposal in the Bill would have the effect of removing part of the responsibility from the companies but, in view of the opinion of the Solicitor General, there seems to be considerable doubt as to whether any extension of time would not operate in the opposite way. As the three months' period is in other comparable legislation and has apparently worked satisfactorily, I shall not move any amendment.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 6—Requirements in respect of policies:

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Solicitor General has drafted several amendments to the clause which I think will meet the contentions raised by the member for Nedlands. The clause deals with the policies required to be issued by insurers. After

examining the clause the Solicitor General decided that it should be re-cast. Subclause (2) reads—

A policy of insurance shall be deemed to comply with this Act notwithstanding the liability of the insurer—

Then it proceeds to set out paragraphs (a) and (b) which members can peruse for themselves. The Solicitor General found that it would be better to redraft part of the provisions. The first amendment will be to strike out in lines 2 and 3 of Subclause (2) the words "the liability of the insurer." The next amendment is to insert those particular words at the commencement of paragraph (a). The third amendment is to insert at the beginning of paragraph (b) of Subclause (2) the words "the policy." That amendment is necessary in order to make the paragraph read sensibly. That deals with the amendments necessary to rectify the verbiage of the clause. Then I come to the question raised by the member for Nedlands who expressed doubt as to whether a person who had a comprehensive policy—that means a policy that insured him against all risks; that certainly does not concern us but it does embody insurance against third party risks—would be exempt from the necessity to take out another third party risk insurance policy under the Bill. The amendment, which has been drafted by the Solicitor General to get over the difficulty suggested by the member for Nedlands, is to add a new paragraph to Subclause (2) as follows:—

(c) the policy, in addition to insuring the owner of the vehicle in respect of the liability mentioned in paragraph (b) of Subsection (1) of this section, also insures him in respect of any other liability or indemnifies him in respect of any insurable loss, damage or injury.

In plain language, this declares that a comprehensive policy, so long as the owner complies with all the other provisions of the measure, is sufficient. If the owner can produce a comprehensive policy for the current period, it will be accepted. I move an amendment—

That in lines 2 and 3 of Subclause (2) the words "the liability of the insurer" be struck out.

Amendment put and passed.

On motions by the Minister for Works, clause further amended by inserting at the beginning of paragraph (a) the words "the liability of the insurer"; and by inserting at the beginning of paragraph (b) the words "the policy."

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I move an amendment—

That the following paragraph be added to Subclause (2):—" (c) the policy, in addition to insuring the owner of the vehicle in respect of the liability mentioned in paragraph (b) of Subsection (1) of this section, also insures him in respect of any other liability or indemnifies him in respect of any insurable loss, damage or injury."

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Bill again reported with further amendments.

Message.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

BILL—INCREASE OF RENT (WAR RESTRICTIONS) ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—New section to be inserted in principal Act:

Mr. SEWARD: I move an amendment—

That all the words after the word "thirty-nine" in line 3 of the proposed new Section 5A (1) be struck out and the following inserted in lieu:—"he shall affix or cause to be affixed in a conspicuous position inside the leased premises a notice verified by statutory declaration specifying the rent of the land on that date. No person shall remove, deface, mutilate or render illegible any such notice. Penalty not less than one pound nor more than ten pounds."

The clause proposes that the lessor may be required by the lessee to furnish a statutory declaration as to the rent on the 31st August, 1939. Presumably that is intended to form an authentic record of the standard rent chargeable under the Act. A tenant who was vacating the premises, however, might not care what became of the statutory declaration, and this evidence of the rent might not be available to the incoming tenant. A better way would be to have a notice fixed in a prominent place inside the house setting out the standard rent and having the declaration attached. Then a prospective tenant would have evidence of the rent to be charged. Otherwise, the lessor might have to furnish a new declaration every time the premises changed hands.

Certain expenses are incurred; a duty stamp has to be attached, and so forth. The Minister's purpose would be met if the certificate were posted in a conspicuous place inside the house or flat, so that prospective tenants might see it.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The clause as printed gives to any lessee the right to require from any lessor, by notice, the furnishment to him of a statutory declaration as to the rent charged for the premises on the 31st August, 1939. Therefore the clause does not make it obligatory on every lessor to provide a statutory declaration in respect of any premises. In other words, the clause does not aim to bring about a wholesale providing of statutory declarations by all landlords in the State. The majority of tenants since the Act was passed have been, and today are, quite satisfied with the existing provision. Either they have been treated fairly by their landlords or, whenever they have required to find out what the standard rent was on the 31st August, 1939, they have not encountered any difficulty in obtaining the information. The clause therefore aims only to give to a tenant the right to require the landlord to set out in a statutory declaration the rent in fact being charged on the 31st August, 1939.

Every landlord is not likely to be called upon to supply a statutory declaration, nor is it likely that the majority of landlords will be called upon to do that. The clause sets out to give a right to a tenant where the tenant has been unable to ascertain, to his own satisfaction, the rent that was charged on the 31st August, 1939, for the premises which he has occupied. It is considered that only a minority of tenants will require to use the power conferred upon them by this clause. The amendment of the member for Pingelly will make it compulsory for every landlord in the State to have prepared, in suitable form, a notice in which there shall be set out the rent that was being charged for the premises, or for each set of premises, on the 31st August, 1939, and would also make it compulsory for such notice to be affixed in a conspicuous position in each house or premises let by a landlord to a tenant. This will cause a considerable amount of work and worry. Furthermore, it will compel every tenant, whether he likes it or not, to advertise in a conspicuous fashion on one of the walls of a room of his

home the amount of rent charged on the 31st August, 1939, and thus also the rent which the tenant is paying for the use of the premises. The susceptibilities of many tenants may be severely wounded if this is forced upon them.

Many tenants regard as strictly confidential the amount they pay for the premises they occupy. It might be said that the home each one of us occupies is a private place and that the general public is not permitted to come into our respective homes, and that therefore the amount of rent we pay weekly for our premises will not become known to the public; but there are occasions when we invite our friends and relations—if on good terms with the latter—and many occasions when we have to allow tradesmen to enter our premises for some reason or other, and hundreds of different sets of circumstances which cause people to have admission to a home. All these people—many of them inclined to be stickybeaks—will see this permanent notice affixed on the wall of one of the rooms, and will also see the amount of rent being paid by the tenant to the landlord. I agree that the idea behind the amendment has much to commend it from the aspect of making available to every tenant complete and accurate knowledge of the rent charged for the premises on the 31st August, 1939. Whilst there is that to be said for the amendment, and perhaps some other things also, I am afraid the arguments against it easily outweigh those in favour of it. I am therefore compelled, somewhat reluctantly, to oppose it.

Mr. SHEARN: Like the Minister, I appreciate some of the points in favour of the amendment; but also like the Minister, I see much about it that is impracticable. Provision is made for a penalty should the notice be removed, defaced, mutilated or rendered illegible. We all know what happens to notices that are affixed to certain premises by health officers; all that remains of them is the portion adhering to the tacks. The amendment, if passed, would cause inconvenience and expense, and there is something to be said in support of the Minister's contention that it is undesirable to place such a notice in a conspicuous part of a home. It would give the home an institutional atmosphere. On account of the undesirable features of the amendment,

which have been explained by the Minister, I find myself unable to support it.

Mr. WATTS: I am convinced that the member for Pingelly, in introducing this amendment, desired to assist the Minister to make the measure of greater value.

The Minister for Labour: I think that, too.

Mr. WATTS: The point is that in a great many cases the rental that was being paid on the 31st August, 1939, is not the rental being paid today and there has been no determination of the court to vary the amount. Great difficulty has been experienced where properties have changed hands during the intervening period and that difficulty will be accentuated the longer the war continues. Tenants of premises find it exceedingly difficult to ascertain the rent paid on the 31st August, 1939, and often feel they are being called upon to pay a higher rent than they would pay were the law carried out. I shall give one example of premises well known to me. In August, 1939, premises were owned by a gentleman who resided in North Perth and who was an extremely reasonable man. He was of considerable age and during the period of his ownership I think all the tenants were entirely satisfied with the treatment they received. They were paying the standard rent, because it was the rent charged at the 31st August, 1939. A little time after, however, this gentleman sold the premises to another person and went to reside in another part of the State. Shortly afterwards the purchaser died and his executors took possession of the premises, and made reductions in some of the rentals. A number of changes took place in the residents of these premises—five or six flats—and finally another person became the owner by purchase from the executors. He promptly raised all the rents by a substantial figure.

This is where I came into the matter, because it was referred to me. The tenants set to work to ascertain what the rental was on the 31st August, 1939. They were unable to get in touch with the original landlord and the second landlord had died. After going to a great deal of trouble, the tenants finally decided not to approach the court. I doubt whether, under the Act, they could have done so. They paid the increased rental demanded of them; but one or two of the tenants feel they are being charged a sub-

stantial sum beyond the standard rent. Had the amendment now moved by the member for Pingelly been the law at that time, such a set of circumstances would never have arisen. My view is that either we should let this matter alone or deal with it properly. The desire of the member for Pingelly is to make the measure as watertight as possible, hence his amendment. I am aware of what might be termed objections of a social character that were raised by the Minister to the amendment. Many tenants, however, would not care who knew the rent were paying and consequently they would not object to the suggested notice. The Minister said that the notice might be in full view of a visitor to afternoon tea, but the member for Pingelly suggested it might be put up on the back of the front door.

The Minister for Labour: What about the back door?)

Mr. WATTS: That would be a conspicuous place and the tenant would be able to discover the position. I think the Minister is not taking the action he ought to take to make this law as effective as it should be. If he wants to determine a conspicuous place in the premises which will not be conspicuous to the visitors to whom he referred, but would make the notice accessible to prospective tenants, let him get to work to amend the provision, but I think that the principle laid down by the member for Pingelly of letting everyone know where he stands is better than the method provided in the clause, which applies only if the lessor was the lessor on the 31st August, 1939. If the lessor has since changed, the provisions of this clause go by the board.

Mr. McLARTY: I support the Minister in this matter. The tenant is given adequate safeguard as the clause stands. If a tenant so desires he may demand from the lessor a statutory declaration in regard to the rent and that must be furnished within seven days. This is the first time I have heard it suggested that such notices should be put in private dwellings. The amendment is not at all complimentary to landlords. The member for Pingelly asks that the notice he suggests shall be placed in a conspicuous place in the house. If the tenant of the house were giving a party she would resent people having a look at a public notice which informed the world what rental she paid.

Mr. SEWARD: My object was to assist the Minister to achieve his purpose. When introducing the Bill he said that many tenants had applied for a statement as to the standard rent and had not been able to obtain it. Under the clause, the landlord of flats would be constantly approached by tenants desiring a statutory declaration because these flats frequently change hands; and I can imagine a landlord growing annoyed under such circumstances. The notice I suggest need not be large and need not necessarily be in full view of everybody visiting the house. It need not be so conspicuous as to be readily readable except by somebody who particularly wanted to read it.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4—agreed to.

Clause 5—New sections to be inserted in principal Act:

Mr. SEWARD: I move an amendment—

That Subsection (4) of proposed new Section 11A be struck out.

I would ask the Minister whether he is satisfied as to the interpretation of "dwelling house." There is no definition of these words. I do not know whether this would apply to flats or to a residence cut up into three or four separate compartments. Would they all be covered by the term "dwelling houses"? We are going beyond what is desirable when we say a penalty of £20 shall be imposed on a lessor who merely asks a prospective tenant whether he has any children. I do not believe we should put any hindrance in the way of people with children obtaining a house. I want to assist them in every possible way, but there may be reasons for a lessor to ask this question. For instance, he may have valuable furniture in his house which would be quite suitable for adults, but would be liable to destruction at the hands of children and, if he knew the applicant had children, he would take steps to remove that furniture and so preserve it. Again, he may desire to do something to protect the children themselves. Only a week or so ago a relative of mine took a lease of a house and subsequently discovered there was a well in the grounds. If a lessor of such a property knew that the applicant had children, he could take measures to make the well safe.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: If the Committee strikes out this proposed Subsec-

tion (4) it will have the effect of reducing almost to a nullity the other words in the provision. If we accept the amendment, the only times it would be possible to prosecute successfully a person for having refused to let a dwelling-house to a tenant with children would be when the landlord had instructed some other person not to let the house to a tenant with children; or had stated his intention, by advertisement or otherwise, not to let the house to a tenant with children.

Mr. Seward: He must prove that that was his reason.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: He would have to do one of the things that I have just mentioned before it would be possible to succeed in a prosecution against him. Any landlord who wanted deliberately to refuse to let a house to a tenant with children could refuse to do so without instructing any other person not to let it, or without advertising his intention.

Mr. Seward: What about proposed Subsection (2)?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Proposed Subsection (1) provides—

A person shall not refuse or procure any person to refuse to let a dwelling-house to any person on the ground that it is intended that a child shall live in the dwelling-house.

Proposed Subsection (2) provides—

In any prosecution for an offence arising under this section, where it is proved that a person has refused or procured any person to refuse to let a dwelling-house to any person it shall lie upon the first-mentioned person to prove that the refusal was for some reason other than that it was intended that a child should live in the dwelling-house.

Mr. Watts: Surely that is sufficient to put the onus of proof on the landlord that it was not because of children.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: If the onus of proof is put on the landlord that that was not the reason, he would put forward in the court what he considered to be other sufficient reasons, but the real reason might still be that the prospective tenant had children. If there is to be any possibility of having evidence to produce in a case against a landlord, it will have to be created by allowing the fact to be adduced that the landlord or his agent inquired of the prospective tenant as to whether he had any children or whether it was intended that any children should live in the house. I do not say that a magistrate would ac-

cept as conclusive evidence on this point the fact that the landlord had inquired of the would-be tenant whether he had children, or whether children were to live in the house. But we should in this proposed amendment allow the right, if any such questions are asked, for them to be accepted as evidence and regarded by the magistrate with whatever merit he thought should be given to them after hearing all the evidence from both sides.

Mr. Watts: That would not be so bad.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Take a possible case. The tenant goes to the landlord and inquires whether the landlord will let to him a vacant house, and the landlord, or his agent, inquires of the tenant whether he has any children. Why would he ask that question?

Mr. Seward: I have given two reasons.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The hon. member put forward what he called reasons; I would describe them as alleged reasons. In 999 cases out of a 1,000 the landlord would ask these questions because it would be his intention not to let the property if the prospective tenant had children who were to occupy the house with the tenant. If the landlord, after asking these questions let the house to the tenant, then, of course, no action could lie. It would only be in those cases where the landlord refused to let the house after asking such questions, that a prosecution could lie.

Mr. Seward: The Bill does not say that.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I would be prepared to alter the clause to read that a prosecution would only lie in the event of the landlord or his agent having refused to let the premises to a prospective tenant after these questions had been asked. I cannot imagine that any tenant would take action against the landlord for having asked these questions if, after they had been asked, the house was let to him.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The clause provides that if the landlord asks these questions, that is the offence.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I shall be quite happy to alter it in the manner I have just described. But we must retain that part of the clause which deals with the case of a landlord or his agent, who asks these questions of an inquiring tenant. Those questions would constitute the most important evidence in any case likely to be

taken under this proposed amendment. I am at a loss to know how any evidence could otherwise be obtained.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: Can the landlord ask a tenant if he has enough money to pay the rent?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Yes.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: Then why not if he has children?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Because his object then would be to refuse to let the premises.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The objection taken by the member for Pingelly was based on two grounds, with only one of which has the Minister dealt. The other point raised by the member for Pingelly was as to what was meant by a dwelling-house. If it is meant to include a flat, then there are obviously strong reasons to be urged why a landlord should not be required to let a flat to a person having children. It is certainly not desirable that children should dwell in flats.

Mr. Watts: Nor are flats desirable for children.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Quite so. In any case I assume that the people would get out of the other flats if one was let to a man having children.

Mr. J. Hegney: Where would the other people go?

The Minister for Labour: Out under the trees.

Hon. N. KEENAN: We are not dealing with circumstances purely as they are.

The Minister for Labour: Yes we are; that is a wartime measure.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I understood the Minister agreed long ago that it was not desirable to encourage families to occupy flats. In no sense can a flat be regarded as a home for children.

The Minister for Labour: Flats are preferable to living out in the moonlight.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Most flats consist of two or three small rooms including one mongrel type of room that is used for everything—cooking, eating, and so on. Such surroundings are unsuitable for young children. The term "dwelling-house" should be defined. If a magistrate were asked to deal with an offence arising out of this legislation, I doubt if he could tell what really constituted a dwelling-house. Does it mean a building separate from others? Does it include a flat? That was probably the most

important point raised by the member for Pingelly. Another point raised by that member and challenged by the Minister was his contention that the provision objected to is not necessary. The Minister said that from the point of view of Subclause (2) it was necessary in order to establish the cause of offence if the owner of a dwelling-house was charged with having refused to let the premises to a person who had some children. It is foolish to say that the retention of the portion objected to is necessary; it is absolutely unnecessary. All that would be necessary for the prosecution to prove would be that there had been a refusal. Thereupon the owner would have to prove to the court that his refusal was not based on his desire to exclude children from the premises sought to be rented by the parent of those children.

The magistrate would peruse the evidence for something clearly indicating what was the intention of the owner. Many things may be relevant to the issue, helping the magistrate to determine that the owner refused to let his premises because the prospective tenant had a family. Surrounding circumstances might assist the magistrate to decide that the owner's explanation that the refusal was based on some other legitimate reason, would not be acceptable. As the clause stands, the owner of premises will be guilty of a new offence carrying the liability of £20 if he merely asks a prospective tenant whether he has a family. That will constitute the whole offence. The Minister says he does not intend that, and doubtless that is quite correct. Nevertheless, that is actually what the provision means.

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The member for Nedlands suggests that the principal Act should be further complicated by the inclusion of definitions covering dwelling-houses and flats. The term "dwelling-house" has appeared in the principal Act since 1939. There is no definition of the term, but the magistrates have been able to deal with all the cases that have been brought before them. In their minds there has been no confusion as to what constitutes a dwelling-house; there has been no conflict between the decisions of the magistrates. On the experience gained by them, we can be satisfied that no doubt will arise in future. No-one is anxious that children should be brought up in flats; the reverse should be the case. At present, however, we are living under war conditions—this is a wartime

measure—and housing conditions throughout Australia are difficult. If a man, his wife and family are not able to obtain an ordinary dwelling-house, it is better for them to take a flat, if available, than to be without accommodation.

I am satisfied that very few owners of flats would refuse to let their houses to tenants with children out of a feeling of concern for the welfare of the children. The only reason for their refusal would be concern for the premises, not for the children. The member for Nedlands laid emphasis on Subclause (2). He said that if a landlord refused to let a dwelling to a prospective tenant with children, the onus of proving that he had not refused to let the premises for that reason would rest upon him. The member for Pingelly showed how easy it would be for a landlord in those circumstances to produce other reasons. There might be a well in the backyard into which careless children might fall; the size or number of the rooms or the structure itself might be unsuitable. Thus a landlord would not be hard pressed to find reasons to prove that he had not refused to let the house because the prospective tenant had children.

We have either to make this provision almost completely effective or to leave it alone. The Leader of the Opposition, speaking on the second reading, rightly said that the problem of providing housing accommodation for people with children, especially for women whose husbands are in the Services, is becoming serious and that something effective should be attempted without delay. The acceptance of this proposal, severe though it may seem, will to a considerable extent ensure that when dwellings become vacant, parents with children will be able to obtain occupancy. In view of the importance and urgency of the matter, we should not be at all squeamish in handling the situation. Rather should we handle it in a strong and complete way.

MR. WARNER: The question of what constitutes a dwelling-house is important. As the member for Nedlands pointed out, many flats contain only one room and a kitchenette, and if such places are to be considered dwelling-houses, we might well ask whether parents with children should be allowed to occupy them. Families that include children should be able to rent houses even

at some inconvenience to the landlord and even though the children might deface the premises or their presence prove disadvantageous to other people living in the vicinity. We need more houses and we need to prevent the erection of slum premises called flats, so that working people may get homes and not be harassed by questions as to whether they have children.

The Minister for Labour: That is the only permanent solution.

Mr. WARNER: Yes. I hope the Government will take steps to ensure that homes are provided for the people so that it will not be necessary for them to seek accommodation in small flats.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: Nobody in this Chamber wants this problem dealt with promptly more sincerely than I do. I am perturbed as to the definition of "dwelling-house." I know of one dwelling-house, in the electorate of the member for Canning, which consists of three rooms and a kitchen and is inhabited by 15 people. Four persons are living in one room—mother and three children. They cannot be put out; there is nowhere else for them to go. I am especially perturbed because I turned my house into two flats some time ago. When Singapore fell, a woman with three children came, and I could not turn them away. For a month after that I do not think I slept one night; I had every window in the place smashed; I had the taps turned on back and front; I had every gate, even if locked, thrown open; I had my roses pulled down; in fact, I had everything done that naughty children could do. I reluctantly asked the woman to leave, but there was nowhere for her and the children to go. Eventually I managed to obtain for her passages to England for herself and the three children. It would be impossible for me to rent my front flat to people with children. If I am summoned for this, and am to be fined £20, I shall still refuse. I have a right to ask an applicant whether there is, for instance, any disease in the family.

The Minister for Labour: The member for Subiaco would not let her flat to people with children?

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I would not now; no fear! If the Minister wishes to make this a workable Bill, he must define what is a dwellable flat. Let the Government give municipalities money to build houses, built on ample land, in which people will be

able to bring their children up. No child has a right to be in a small flat. I have told members honestly what I feel. In West Perth there is actually a garage inhabited by a man and wife and children. Is that garage a dwelling-house?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: On the point raised by the member for Subiaco, I am prepared to trust the commonsense of magistrates as to what they consider is a dwelling-house, just as we have trusted their commonsense under the principal Act during the last four years. I was particularly interested to hear the member for Subiaco declare so vehemently that she as a house-owner would not in any circumstances let her property for occupancy by tenants with children.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: Her flat, not her property. I ask for that to be withdrawn. I did not say my "property."

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: What is the difference?

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: I would let, in those circumstances, my property, but not my flat, which is a portion of the property. I ask for a withdrawal.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Subiaco has asked for a withdrawal.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: If a flat is not a property, I have a good deal to learn. In any event, there is nothing to withdraw.

Hon. N. Keenan: Mr. Chairman, did you order the Minister to withdraw when you were asked by the member for Subiaco to do so?

The CHAIRMAN: I have asked the Minister to withdraw.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: There was nothing offensive, in any shape or form, in what I said. I want to know, Mr. Chairman, whether under the Standing Orders you consider it necessary for me to withdraw, and whether I am obliged to withdraw when there was nothing offensive in the remark I made.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Subiaco has explained that she considers the words objectionable. Therefore I ask for a withdrawal of the words.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: What are the words?

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: "Property."

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: As the Standing Orders make it necessary for a member to withdraw when a member takes objection to some statement, in accordance

with them I certainly will withdraw the word "property."

Hon. N. KEENAN: I suggest to the Minister that, to achieve his purpose, proposed new Subsection (4) should be included in proposed new Subsection (2) in the form of a proviso, with additional words providing that on any such prosecution evidence shall be admissible to the effect that the person, called in proposed new Subsection (2) the first-mentioned person, had inquired of the prospective tenant whether such prospective tenant had any children. Does the Minister follow that?

The Minister for Labour: Yes.

Hon. N. KEENAN: It is not an offence; it is evidence to sustain a prosecution under proposed Subsection (2). The insertion of the proviso would make the matter certain.

Mr. WATTS: I find myself in this discussion considerably in agreement with the Minister. At the same time, I recognise the position in which the member for Pingelly finds himself in asking that these words be struck out. When the Minister said he was prepared to qualify this proposed subsection by providing that a penalty could not be inflicted where the premises had not actually been let, he was going a long way towards the amendment.

The Minister for Labour: I am prepared to do that.

Mr. WATTS: I take it the Minister's intention is to insert the necessary proviso in another place. On the face of it, it appears ridiculous that a landlord cannot ask a question without risking a penalty. It is all very well for the Minister to say that magistrates exercise discretion.

The Minister for Labour: They do.

Mr. WATTS: But the law ought to be certain.

The Minister for Labour: You cannot make it certain on all points.

Mr. WATTS: It can be made certain in a case such as this. The Minister's proposed amendment would go a long way towards removing the objection, his argument being that the fact that a particular question is asked by a landlord of a prospective tenant is *prima facie* evidence that the landlord has a mental reservation as to children, because otherwise he would not ask the question. I subscribe to the principle of the Bill and what the Minister has said convinces me that some wider provisions are required. I hope the Minister will give this

point the greatest consideration, so that there may be some reasonable assurance that people will not be put in a difficult position when they have done nothing wrong. There may be two applicants for premises, one of whom may have five children and the other three. The landlord would be doing his duty, even in the Minister's opinion, if he let the premises to the person with three children; but the other applicant, having been refused, would in all probability take proceedings. That would not be justice, but injustice, because the premises had been let. Instances are not lacking where there has been more than one applicant for a dwelling. As the Minister has said, we should find means of providing these youngsters with homes, not cubby-holes, but homes in which they can be reared in decency.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I give my assurance with regard to the amendment. An offence will only be committed where the landlord does refuse to let the house. If the Leader of the Opposition has any other amendment which he thinks will be appropriate and will supply it to me in writing, I will see that it receives careful consideration.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. SEWARD: I move an amendment—

That at the end of Subsection (2) of proposed new Section 11A the following proviso be added:—"Provided that the provisions of this section shall not apply to the lease of any dwelling house including goods and chattels in any case where such goods and chattels are not less than reasonably adequate for the furnishing thereof as a dwelling."

My idea is to afford protection to tenants. If a landlord puts a few sticks of furniture into a house he should not call it a furnished house. Many objections might be raised to children going to houses where there are articles of furniture of some value which it would not be suitable to have within their reach. It is only reasonable, however, to take precautions to ensure that a person cannot put a table in one room and a few chairs in another and call the place a furnished house.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: As I understand it, the amendment seeks to establish what shall be regarded as a furnished house. Maybe I have not studied the amendment sufficiently, but my reading suggests that it provides that the proposed new section which we aim to insert in the principal

Act through the medium of Clause 5, and which deals with the refusal by landlords or their agents to let houses to people with children, shall not apply in respect of any dwelling-house where the goods and chattels are not less than reasonably adequate for the furnishing thereof. If the amendment is agreed to, the proposed new section will not be permitted to apply to any dwelling-house which is reasonably well-furnished. I suggest the amendment might not do what the hon. member thinks it will, and that it may not achieve the purpose for which he had it drafted, but a purpose entirely different. I have not discussed the amendment with the Crown Law officers.

Mr. Watts: I wish you had, because it is important to know the effect.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: If the legal and lay members of the Committee read this amendment in relation to the clause with which it deals, I am sure they will see that it will place outside of the proposed new section, covering the refusal of landlords to let dwelling-houses to tenants with children, any dwelling-houses that are furnished to a certain stage.

Mr. Watts: To an adequate stage.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Yes. That is my interpretation, and I think that on a clear reading of it that would be the opinion of most members of the Committee. Therefore the amendment should not be accepted. If we are going to establish a special class of landlord and say that this special class may refuse to let furnished dwelling-houses to would-be tenants with children, we are going to break down the principle which Clause 5 aims to establish.

Mr. Watts: Have you any idea what proportion of dwelling-houses are let furnished?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: A very small proportion.

Mr. Watts: That is what I thought.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I ask the Committee to defeat the amendment.

Mr. WATTS: I was under the impression there were only a small number of furnished houses.

The Minister for Labour: Not a small number; a small percentage.

Mr. WATTS: That is what I meant. It therefore struck me that it was not unreasonable to insert this provision. What I

was worried about was the necessity for ensuring that a place could not benefit by this provision unless it was properly furnished as a home. I want to ensure that of the small percentage of premises which are let furnished, only those that are adequately furnished shall be able to claim exemption from the drastic provisions of the clause. If the Minister can evolve some method whereby that can be done, so that the bulk of houses—all those not adequately furnished—are subject to the provisions of the proposed new section, we shall have no objection. Those few places that are well furnished are entitled to some consideration beyond that given to vacant houses. That is all I seek—not for any special class of landlord to be created but for a determination to be made as to what is really a well-furnished house.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. SEWARD: I hope the Minister will reconsider his attitude and accept the amendment. After all there is a need for houses to be built by private individuals. If we make the restrictions too hard they will give up the practice of building houses and so make the position worse. Today it is almost impossible to get furniture, and the amendment seeks to protect the furniture in the house.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. SEWARD: I move an amendment—

That in line 8 of Subsection (1) of proposed new Section 11B the words "and the name and address of" be struck out.

Obviously the address of the tenant was the house that was let. Many lessors would not know the names and present addresses of tenants of flats in 1939.

Mr. Watts: Such a lessor would certainly not know the present address of those tenants.

Mr. SEWARD: The reason for this provision is to ensure that a record of the rentals that have been received is kept. That is already achieved by the statutory declaration.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I have no objection to the deletion of the words in this part of the proposed subsection, but I will object to their deletion from the next part.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. SEWARD: I move an amendment—

That in line 12 of Subsection (1) the words "and the name and address of" be struck out.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The position in this case is different from that dealt with by the last amendment. This portion of the proposed subsection means that if the landlord is in a position to supply the name and address of the tenant who first leased the land he is bound to do so. He will at least be able to supply the name of the tenant who first leased the land when it was let after the 31st August, 1939, even though he may not now know the present address of that person. In some cases it is possible that the present address of such tenant could be supplied. In such instances it must be given but, if it is not possible, then the landlord could not do it.

Mr. McLARTY: I cannot follow the Minister on this amendment. If the lessor must supply the name and present address of the tenant an obligation should be imposed on the tenant to keep him informed of that address. The Minister admits it will be possible to supply the name, but it is quite likely the lessor will be unable to furnish the tenant's address. As it stands, the clause will mean that, although desirous of meeting all his obligations, the lessor may perforce find himself in the position of having to break the law. The Minister should give further consideration to the matter.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause, as previously amended, put and passed.

Clause 6, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment, and the report adopted.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1943-44.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the previous day; Mr. Marshall in the Chair.

Vote—Public Works and Buildings, £195,780 (partly considered):

MR. TONKIN (North-East Fremantle) [7.44]: I do not wish the vote to go through without expressing my appreciation of the development that has taken place in connection with the State Engineering Works. For years I have complained about the book-keeping arrangements and certain other handicaps imposed upon the operations of that undertaking by successive Governments. I

have no cause for complaint now, because satisfactory alterations have been effected. The works themselves have been rehabilitated; old junk has been thrown out; the buildings have been re-modelled; new machinery has been installed. The result is that the State Engineering Works as at present constituted represent something worth while. Last year a profit was returned of over £3,000, but I do not know what the results of this year's operations have been. The altered financial arrangements make it possible for something to be achieved. Under the old regime when work was undertaken for the Government the management was allowed to charge only the actual cost without any provision for interest and sinking fund charges. The effect was that it was a losing proposition all the time.

Under the amended financial arrangements, the management is now allowed to charge on the basis of cost plus profit, so that on all work undertaken a profit can be shown. In these days it does one good to go through the works and note the transformation that has taken place. In place of the old junk heap we find the whole place well laid out, considerably enlarged and up-to-date machinery installed. It augurs well for future development in the post-war period. As the Minister pointed out, quite a lot of shipping work has been undertaken and it has been carried out to the satisfaction of all concerned. That suggests that, when normal conditions return, the effectiveness of the State Engineering Works will gradually develop and the undertaking will be an asset of increasing value to the State. From time to time the management has received complimentary reports from the Navy regarding work that has been carried out. I am satisfied that the State institution will continue to turn out work of a high order with considerable despatch. Thus it is that I do not desire this opportunity to pass without expressing my keen satisfaction to the Minister regarding the altered outlook in connection with the State Engineering Works, and to express my gratitude to him for the encouragement he has extended to them.

I would like to make a brief reference to the shipbuilding activities which have been commenced in my electorate. Some members have already had an opportunity to see one vessel launched and they will have

a further chance to see a second boat put in the water on Monday next. I hope as many members as possible will take advantage of the opportunity. True, the ships that are being constructed are not ocean-going liners, nor are they ships of war. Though small, no doubt they will be of value in the scheme of things later on. At any rate, they go to show that we can do the job here once we decide to embark upon it. During the initial stages we suffered handicaps because our skilled artisans were encouraged to go to the Eastern States. Shipwrights and many other skilled tradesmen left for South Australia and Victoria very soon after the war started. We have been forced to build up on the basis of the workers available within the State, and gradually a staff has been collected that is proving itself quite competent. This is an industry that we all hope will be considerably developed later on. I hope it will not be restricted to the construction of wooden ships. In fact, there is a possibility that we may later on embark upon turning out steel vessels.

We are making a start with the production of charcoal iron, although it is admitted that the plant is largely experimental. Once it is established, if we can produce iron of a high quality, no doubt we will develop along the lines I indicate. We can look to the future with a fair degree of confidence that the heavy industry now in its initial stages will expand, and play an important part in our future economic life. Those of us who are concerned about securing full-time employment for our people find the present outlook very enheartening, warranting the belief that in the post-war period we shall not have the terrible experience through which we passed during the depression after the 1914-1918 war. The Commonwealth Government is drawing up plans for the special purpose of preventing the return of those bad old days. If we can establish firmly the industries upon which we have embarked in this State in recent months, we shall have done something substantial that will stand us in good stead when the larger plans are in operation. While the ships we are building at present are small they represent a start, demonstrating that we can carry out works of this nature once we make the attempt. Finally, I wish to reiterate my keen appreciation to the Minister of the improved condi-

tions obtaining at the State Engineering Works.

Vote put and passed.

Votes—Town Planning, £1,650; Unemployment Relief and State Labour Bureau, £3,520; Lands and Surveys, £60,013; Farmers' Debts Adjustment, £2,658; Agricultural Bank, Industries Assistance Board, Soldiers' Land Settlement, £5—agreed to.

Vote—Agriculture, £118,920.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [7.52]: I thought the Minister for Agriculture would have something to say on the Estimates of his department, and it is well that he should have an opportunity to do so, but the votes are being passed with such celerity—

The Minister for Agriculture: I scarcely realised that my department had been reached.

Mr. WATTS: If I give way to the Minister at this stage, shall I have an opportunity to speak later?

The **CHAIRMAN:** I am not responsible if members miss the opportunity to speak. An opportunity is given when the vote is called and, if members do not make their contribution, it is their loss. The Leader of the Opposition must proceed with his remarks now.

Mr. WATTS: There are many things I expected to hear from the Minister, and there are many things that have been discussed in this House to which he has doubtless paid attention and on which he could give us information. I am hopeful that we shall receive from the hon. gentleman some information as to the position in the coming year of superphosphate supplies. I also wonder whether it is possible for him to tell us, with any greater satisfaction than he has been able to convey in the past, the position regarding manpower for the rural districts. Unquestionably great damage is being done on farms on account of the absence of a sufficiency of labour, and that damage will take many years to repair. It is not so much that the men left on the farms, though many of them are really too old to engage in arduous work, have not done their best to maintain the properties but, broadly speaking, this position has been brought about by the impossibility of carrying out maintenance work.

Firstly, there has been a grave shortage of materials. At times it is almost impossible to purchase nails suitable for effecting repairs to sheep-yards and other installa-

tions. At other times—and I think this still prevails—it is almost impossible to obtain wire for repairing fences. Farm buildings are not being kept in repair and their condition is steadily deteriorating. Apart from the loss to pastures through a shortage of superphosphate, there has been a loss in other directions owing to the absence of cultivation in certain areas where cultivation should have taken place. Therefore it occurs to me that one of the matters that ought to be concerning us is whether we can take any steps now and, if not, what arrangements we can make immediately the war position eases to any extent, to have things in readiness to overtake this deterioration which has occurred on such a large proportion of agricultural properties in this State during recent years. To that question it may be that the hon. gentleman has given consideration, and will be able to inform us of some plan or proposal that he has in mind to speed up the restoration of these properties.

A few months ago I had an opportunity to visit the Miling district and there I met an enthusiastic man, the manager of the local bank, who had interested himself very greatly, not only for professional but also for sympathetic and personal reasons, in the Pastoral Improvement Association, to which practically all the farmers in the district belong. I had the privilege of conversing with several farmers in the neighbourhood, and I must say that I was impressed with the work that has been done through the encouragement afforded to pastoral improvement by this association and particularly by this man, as secretary, and by the president. I would be interested to know whether the activities of the association have received the consideration of the Department of Agriculture, and whether the department thinks that the association is working on right lines. So far as I can ascertain, it is, but I would be interested to know that the department considers the work being done there is on right lines and will be of value to the community and will be encouraged.

Another matter to which I wish to make reference is that of the disparity between the prices of certain primary products in Western Australia and the Eastern States. From time to time, these disparities have been brought under notice. Recently we have had reference to the price of meat in Western

Australia in contrast to the price in the Eastern States. According to newspaper reports, it appears that mutton is approximately $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound lower in price to producers here than it is in Victoria and New South Wales. This might not be so bad were it an isolated instance. I have before me a letter from the Federal Prices Control Department concerning the price of honey. Honey, as my colleague, the member for Swan, will doubtless admit, is a most nourishing substance, and the only reason why the price should be low, I suggest, is that it should be consumed in very large quantities. So far as I can ascertain, there has been no difficulty in disposing of the output and therefore, if production is to be maintained and increased in face of constantly rising costs, the producers claim that the question of fixing a fair price should receive consideration. Some little time ago I was told that the price paid to the Western Australian producer was considerably lower than that paid in the Eastern States. I took some interest in the matter to ascertain whether that was so and what was the reason for it. I have received by the courtesy of Senator Fraser from the Prices Controller a communication which is most interesting, as I think the Committee will agree—

Commonwealth Prices Branch,

Canberra, A.C.T.,

24th September, 1943.

Dear Sir,—Reference is made to a communication dated 11th August, 1943, addressed to you by Mr. A. F. Watts, M.L.A., Parliament House, Perth, regarding the fixed price for honey in Western Australia, which was referred to the Commonwealth Prices Commissioner for consideration and advice.

I am directed to inform you in reply that the question of honey prices was fully investigated. The investigation resulted in an increase in the price to the producer in Western Australia to $5\frac{1}{2}$ d. per lb. for choicest grade and the maintenance of existing differentials on lower grades. In determining the new prices, full consideration was given to the prices ruling at the outbreak of war and also to those obtained at the date of declaration of this commodity on 15th April, 1943.

The difference between prices in operation in Western Australia and the Eastern States is more apparent than real. The price of $5\frac{1}{2}$ d. in Western Australia is nett to the producer, but the price of $7\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the Eastern States is gross and is subject to deduction of at least $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a pound for selling costs and levies. The difference therefore is actually less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. a lb. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the return from the W.A. Honey Pool—to which

all growers can send their produce—will be at least 6d. a lb. during the present year.

A fact which appears to have been overlooked by the association is that the differential in honey prices between West Australian and N.S.W. producers was greater prior to the war than it is at present.

I am to add that costs of production of honey in Western Australia during the last two years have been considerably lower than those incurred in the Eastern States owing to the less unfavourable seasonal conditions experienced.

(Sgd.) Yours faithfully,

C. E. Williamson,
Secretary.

To say that the difference in price to the producer as between Western Australia and the Eastern States of nearly 1½d. is more apparent than real seems to me extraordinary.

Mr. Sampson: It is juggling with words.

Mr. WATTS: I would not call it even that. I will not try to find a suitable phrase.

The Minister for Agriculture: Damn silly, I would say.

Mr. WATTS: However, that is the communication I received. It deals with a difference of approximately 25 per cent. in prices and, except for the statement in a rather long letter to the effect that costs in Western Australia are probably lower than costs in the Eastern States owing to better seasonal conditions here, there is no attempt made to justify that difference. The ruling, however, was made on the 25th April, before there were any seasonal conditions to justify the case, even supposing that the conditions were applicable to the instance under review. The circumstances which brought the matter under my notice are also interesting. A honey producer who has been accustomed for many years to receive 6d. per lb. for honey in 60 lb. tins, free on rail Katanning, advertised in "The West Australian," as he had done for many years past, that he had honey on those terms for sale, and was immediately met with threats of a prosecution. The prosecution did not take place, but correspondence did.

It seems to me there is no justification whatever for the Western Australian producer in the particular case—there being no suggestion of inferiority of quality—suffering a "more apparent than real" reduction of 1½d. per lb. on his produce. Nobody will deny that honey at 6d. a lb. is a good and payable food in two ways, especi-

ally when one compares it with the product, jam. I am exceedingly sympathetic with the honey producers in this regard. The "differential," as the letter calls it, between this State and the rest of Australia, must sometimes induce in our producers an inferiority complex. They must get the impression that there is something marvellous in the Eastern States honey, as otherwise producers there would not get 1½d. per lb. more for it. I would like the Minister to join us, if he will, in investigating the subject. I do not propose to touch on other agricultural matters, except on some of the items.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:

I missed my opportunity to introduce these votes; and also the sections on land, to which I wished specifically to refer, must go without further explanation. Generally there are so many phases of the subject that one could address himself to, that the story would be very long and entail the infliction of a very long speech on members. Certainly that would be the result if I tried to cover the many aspects and the many worries allied with agricultural land matters at the present time. Members know that very heavy obligations were entered into at the outbreak of war to supply food to Great Britain. We contracted to sell her tremendous quantities of wheat and dairy products and meat; and in the first year of the war the value of the agricultural products contracts with the United Kingdom exceeded £105,000,000. Since that time, in spite of the scarcity of shipping, and especially of refrigerated shipping, Australia has kept her quota supplied to Great Britain in rather a startling way.

In addition to producing these specified requirements for foodstuffs, it has been necessary to supply Britain with very many commodities which have not been commercially produced in this country in pre-war days. Commodities such as flax, and others of which the economic production in Australia had previously proved relatively unsuccessful, had to be undertaken in the interests of Great Britain. War causes have also influenced deliveries of our commodities. We have had, firstly, transport problems of some magnitude both internal and external; and the absence of transport facilities has also placed considerable strain on cold storage, especially for perishable commodities

awaiting shipment which formerly were shipped away regularly. Tremendous storage had to be supplied in an endeavour to cope with the situation. There were also variations made in the types of commodities that were required. Notable amongst those variations were the quick changes that Great Britain requested in the weights of such products as bacon and pork. Such quick changes due to oversea circumstances meant almost chaotic conditions at times in attempts to plan production.

Superphosphate shortages and fertiliser difficulties generally rank among the prime problems that have been encountered and overcome in some way or other. Non-availability of seeds, insecticides and materials for irrigation and farm plant generally has also caused considerable disturbance. One of the most important drawbacks to Australia's rural life was the cessation of the manufacture of all kinds of farm machinery, because all the plant used in the manufacture of such machinery has been diverted to the manufacture of munitions. In addition to the manpower shortage caused by enlistments, machinery was not available to ease the manpower situation.

Mr. Patrick: I think we have supplied Great Britain with much of our agricultural machinery.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We have. Unfortunately, I fear a long time will elapse before Australia's machinery needs for agriculture are satisfied because of the transposition that will be necessary from the manufacture of munitions to the manufacture of agricultural machinery. I desire to refer to what flax production has meant to Australia and to this State particularly. Before the war, Great Britain's demands were almost always met by the finer types of flax grown in Belgium. Owing to the inability of Belgium to supply flax, and to the tremendous loss of supplies left in Belgium because of the early collapse of France, Great Britain was placed in an awkward position. All that was saved of the seed necessary to keep up supplies for England was 400 tons. That was all that was obtained from the Continent when it appeared that our Forces would have to leave there. Australia, as most members are aware, was able to get early a proportion of that seed and has since made a splendid contribution to Great

Britain's requirements. The acreage in this State has increased from 1,000 in the first year to nearly 9,000 last year. One district in Western Australia has the largest acreage under flax of any district in Australia.

Mr. McLarty: Which district is that?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Boyup Brook. Prices have been satisfactorily adjusted and I claim some credit in that matter owing to my having incessantly pointed out our particular difficulties. We have had price adjustments that have meant an increase of £5 on the standard return for the first year to £10 this year, which will, with certain bonuses, be the maximum price. The average price to be received in Western Australia for fibre for the current harvest is expected to be in the vicinity of £9. Three mills have been established in the State and one of them is the largest mill of its kind in Australia. It is situated at Boyup Brook.

We are endeavouring to plan this industry so that it will be likely to have a perpetual economic life in this State. There are approximately 200 growers, and when it is considered that in the post-war period 20,000 acres of this crop will be required in Australia, it will be for the State that makes the greatest success in meeting the wartime demand to receive the greatest consideration for Australia's future needs. We are endeavouring, while there is the stimulus to the growing of this crop by way of bonuses, guarantees and the like, to have it established on a foundation that will ensure for it perpetual life in this State. We have undertaken a considerable amount of research in an endeavour to improve types and evolve varieties, and to breed under artificial conditions certain species of rust and disease so as to evolve resistant types. The quality of our fibre is vouched for by the buyer for the British Government. He speaks in terms that are absolutely unqualified and says that the fibre produced in this State is equal to the best Belgium fibre, for which there has been such a splendid market in England during normal times.

The tobacco industry has also been given special attention. Last year 1,600 acres of the crop was grown in Western Australia for a production of over 1,250,000 lbs. of leaf. During the last five years we have undertaken considerable research in evolving varieties not merely better suited to Western Australia's soils and climatic conditions, but also within those varieties to grow the type

of leaf most in demand by discriminating smokers. Much has been done in the counteracting of diseases, in planning for proper rotations, in experiments with soil types, and in experiments with flue curing and all the many treatment phases of this crop, which is rather difficult to grow under many circumstances. The Government has shown its faith in the industry by providing seasonal finance to the tobacco growers. For four successive years the Government has made advances of up to £15 an acre to assist in the initial expenditure in planting the crop. Last year 41 growers took advantage of those advances. This year we have advanced £5,500. So far, every penny of the money has been repaid year by year. I am not satisfied with some aspects of the marketing and appraisalment of the leaf, about which I have made many complaints.

Appraisements are being made at the present time, and the indications are that the price will not be quite equal to that of last year. The fixing of an average price is a matter that should be considered by the Commonwealth authorities; growers claim that it would give greater stability to the industry and offer a better prospect for them. The member for Sussex will be interested to know that an area has been located in his electorate which has been proved commercially by the department and is greater in size even than the Manjimup area. This will be available for tobacco growing and consequently the prospects for the expansion of the tobacco crop within Western Australia are extraordinarily good. For three years I have made representations at Agricultural Council meetings for Commonwealth finance in order to carry out certain experimentation in this State and to provide finance for growers. It is only this year that success has met my efforts. I am very pleased to be able to say that the Commonwealth Government has agreed to grant to the State the sum of £38,000 to be spent in furthering the tobacco industry and mainly for financing it in new areas. I am hoping that that will be a very encouraging flip to the industry, especially in those new areas.

I think it is necessary to say a few words in connection with wheat. I do not wish to traverse the subject in detail as I have often done in this Chamber, nor to expand my ideas on the effect that wheat has on Western Australia's internal economy. I have special-

ised in that strain on many occasions. However, I think it is necessary to keep emphasising to all those in Federal spheres just how important in Western Australian agriculture is the single crop of wheat. I am afraid that in spite of the protests made, there is still a lack of realisation in the Eastern States of the important place of wheat in the stable and secure districts of Western Australia in respect to our whole national economy. Even our bulk handling plans were formulated to cope with harvests ranging from 25,000,000 to 30,000,000 bushels. All the anticipations of towns and districts and all the planned production and farming in those districts—if we entirely disregard the claims of the outer areas—have been based on agriculture involving a wheat production of from 25,000,000 to 30,000,000 bushels. Without seasonal risks anywhere, at least 25,000,000 to 30,000,000 bushels could be Western Australia's contribution to the wheat requirements of the world.

Without any compensation plan, it is unsound to think of perpetuating the Western Australian wheat industry on the present restricted basis. I am very sorry indeed to express the view that the Commonwealth authorities, even today, have very little appreciation of the position in relation to the future prosperity of this State, and I speak mainly on behalf of the areas where stability of wheat is possible in Western Australia. I venture this opinion, too, that before very long the Commonwealth Government will find it necessary to stimulate production in at least two States of the Commonwealth. The traffic in wheat from south to north on the eastern side of the Continent is very heavy at present and, although Queensland produces only 6,000,000 or 7,000,000 bushels a year and cannot cope with her present need, I believe that the Commonwealth Government will find it necessary shortly to stimulate wheat production in districts where there has been an endeavour to restrict such production.

Work is still being carried on by the department in connection with the evolving of new varieties best suited to Western Australia and we have created history in that regard. Over 50 per cent. of the wheat grown in New South Wales is from varieties evolved in this State, and year by year there continue to be improvements in the

results from that section of research carried out in Western Australia.

Mr. Patrick: That is the reverse of what formerly obtained. We used to grow New South Wales wheat.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is so. An important point is the improvement in the baking quality of the varieties now being tested, and the work of the field staff and of the cereal research officer, Dr. Samuels, is a valuable contribution to our agricultural research in this State.

I would say a few words on the question of pastures which is allied to one of the matters mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition—the question of superphosphate shortage. It can safely be said that pastures are still the most important crop in the world, and the improvement in pastures and pasture management in Western Australia has been very satisfactory, in spite of the difficulties due to superphosphate shortage.

The possible retrogression on account of restrictions in quantities to be applied is very unfortunate. However, it is a striking fact that in spite of the severe superphosphate restrictions—although those restrictions are not as severe in relation to pastures as in relation to many forms of cropping—there was in the last calendar year an addition of 70,000 acres of pastures laid down and top-dressed in this State. We still have approaching 1,250,000 acres of pastures top-dressed in this State and in the fertiliser being applied there has been a marked increase in copperised super—that is, super to which bluestone is added and which our scientists have proved has had a material effect in counteracting copper deficiencies in the soil and, through the crops from that soil, copper deficiencies in stock. Very much work has been done in that direction and other elements, as members know, are being tested with a view to their incorporation in the fertilising agency so that the stock will get them in that way rather than through the addition of minerals to foods or in the form of licks.

We have had difficulty in obtaining pasture seeds and unfortunately that also will have a detrimental effect. A quantity of rock has reached this State during the last fortnight, and it is hoped it will go some distance towards meeting the anticipated needs of Western Australia, though not on the basis of normality as exemplified in the year 1939, when I think 260,000 tons of super were

used in this State. Although we are a long way from the figure I have mentioned and from the prospect of getting that quantity, there is a trend in the direction of a marked increase in supplies if our anticipations for the next 12 months are realised. What effect that will have on any individual crop I would not venture to say because, according to what are considered to be the needs in the various avenues of production, so will the supplies have to be allotted in order that the best results may be obtained from the crops that are needed to be sown for consumption later.

Mr. Boyle: Is the rock of a high quality?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The rock coming in is better than some of the Egyptian stone which gave us cause for considerable concern almost two years ago and was commented on in this Chamber by the member for Pingelly—rock that was so refractory that a large quantity of sulphuric acid and lime had to be added. It is anticipated that instead of super with 18 to 20 per cent. of phosphoric acid we have the prospect of getting nearer to a 23 per cent. content. All of these things are important, and it depends entirely on the source of the phosphatic rock.

I wish to say a few words about the dried fruits. Although a considerable tonnage has been packed in this State—about 1,600 tons of currants, 270 tons of sultanas and so on—the future for dried fruits, in an Australia-wide sense, is certainly rather gloomy. Australia's annual production of dried fruits is in the vicinity of 17,000 tons, and we reached the stage, in a world sense, when many of the large producing countries, even Turkey, had tremendous quantities in the year preceding the war, which either had to be dumped or converted into spirit, or alcohol of some sort. That condition existed in several countries because of the over-production of fruits of the dried wine-fruit type, especially, so that the future, unless we can control and restrict the position as Australia has done for many years, is not very bright.

I now wish to refer to the stock position in this State. It is rather remarkable to see how the numbers in the various districts have been reversed in recent years. The effect of the prolonged drought on sheep numbers in our pastoral districts is very marked. In 1935, of our 11,000,000 sheep, approximately one-half was located in the pastoral areas. Although today the total

has been rebuilt to about 10,500,000 sheep, approximately 3,000,000 are in the pastoral areas and 7,500,000 in the agricultural districts. The increase since the outbreak of war is over 1,000,000 sheep in Western Australia. The change in the position of our sheep population is naturally likely to have a serious effect on both the population and wealth production of the different sections of the State. With the breaking of the drought, in spite of the inability to get the numbers built up quickly because of transport difficulties, the good agricultural season last year gave us a wool-clip which was a record for the State.

Western Australia produced 92,000,000 lbs. of wool last year. The average production was 8.4 lbs. per sheep and the average price 13.53d. per lb. of greasy wool. I will give members an idea of the traffic in sheep in this State. The numbers marketed through Midland were nearly 770,000, or an increase of over 100,000 in two years. One thing I would like to mention in connection with the sheep industry, both agriculturally and in the sphere of the greater numbers in the pastoral industry proper, is the unfortunate occurrence of the ravages of blowflies during the past two years. It was most unfortunate that after a six-years drought, during which the loss of sheep in the pastoral districts exceeded 4,000,000, we should have such a visitation as was made last year. We have taken the precaution of having officers deal with such matters as the Mules operation and giving different seasonal attention to sheep; altering shearing times, and giving them an opportunity to cope with the scourge that has gone through this State and caused great losses, especially in new sheep in the northern pastoral districts.

I view the increase in sheep numbers in Western Australia with some concern because of the present pasture conditions, due to the absence of superphosphate and labour. Last year only 58 per cent. of the normal hay crop was cut in this State. Another 1,000,000 sheep in the agricultural districts and the prospect of the hay crop to be harvested being even less favourable than last year, is a circumstance to be viewed with some concern. With the big flow of sheep to the markets, when the main off-shears traffic commences, there is a prospect of fat mutton, as well as the grazier types of sheep, being in much greater supply than will be

necessary to meet the demand. I view with some concern the prospects in some of the districts of getting the flocks through the summer because of the hay position with which we are faced. Last year 280,000 fat lambs were treated for export. Although in our fat lamb industry some of the improving circumstances of breeding and selection to get a type that was becoming a credit to Western Australia will be retarded, it will not be for very long.

I have every hope that the fat lamb industry will, before long, reach the figure of 500,000 per annum for export. I think that goal can be confidently anticipated. The storage and treatment works taken over by the Government at Robb's Jetty are, in spite of serious day-labour problems and all sorts of worries, coping with the situation. On one day last week we reached a figure of over 4,000. With the cold-storage conditions there, if we can get the requisite additional labour and keep the present numbers of men employed, we shall get through the season without any serious troubles. The men are doing a splendid job and, in spite of difficult circumstances, we confidently hope to have no trouble in that regard.

One section of the rural industry in which the member for Murray-Wellington is particularly interested, and which has had a serious set-back because of the war, is the dairy industry. Although two years ago it was anticipated that there would be a tremendous shrinkage in dairy production in Western Australia, members will recall that it is almost three years since questions were being asked and motions launched in connection with the marketing of dairy stock through our saleyards—the marketing of young stock. It was anticipated that there would be a serious decline in dairy production in Western Australia.

Although the lack of superphosphate for pastures has had a very prejudicial effect on the industry, the results last year showed only a very small decline over those of the two preceding years, and one of those two preceding years was the one in which we attained our maximum production. Last year, the production was the third highest recorded for the State—approximately 14,500,000 lbs. of butter. Cheese increased tremendously to 1,600,000 lbs., and condensed and concentrated milk had a total production of nearly 7,000,000 tons. Dairy

farmers, under the trying circumstances of labour shortages and with the older people carrying on, have done a remarkable job. Theirs is a task that is never easy, and it is always constant. The dairy units in the various parts of the State have voluntarily endeavoured to do their utmost to keep up the required production.

One interesting feature is that butter consumption has tremendously increased in Western Australia. Since the war began, the increased figures would have meant, in the days of peace, the shipping of a much greater quantity into Western Australia if our normal export had continued to counteract the demand. The results from compulsory grading introduced by legislation in this House a few years ago have had a remarkable effect. Members will recollect the interest in the debate on the amendment to the Dairy Industry Act. All that was anticipated in the improvement and quality is being experienced. Latterly, because of labour difficulties, supervision has not been all that we would wish, but the results are very good. Very many people are wondering whether such expedients as butter rationing are worthwhile. It may be of interest to the Committee and to the public generally to learn just to what extent butter rationing plays a part in contributing to greater exports to the United Kingdom.

In pre-war days the export of butter from Australia to the United Kingdom was in the vicinity of 110,000 tons. In some years it varied considerably, but the rationing of butter to approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. per head per week will mean a contribution of 17,000 tons additional butter supplies for England. Even Western Australia's contribution on the ration-basis will give us an extra 47,000 boxes—120 tons—from this State. These figures, taken on the basis of a per capita contribution spread over a period of 12 months, attain really remarkable proportions. When we realise that in England the people are only allowed 2 ozs. of butter per week, which means $6\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. for the year, we must appreciate that the people there are suffering considerably. One of the important matters in the maintenance of public morale in England is that supplies of such necessary foodstuffs as butter shall not be further reduced.

I suggest for consideration on the part of those who complain about being rationed

down to 26 lbs. of butter a year, the fact that the people of England are to be very highly commended for their uncomplaining attitude and to be complimented on their desire to share what butter they do receive under the system of rationing with our lads who are oversea in connection with various war activities. I have one or two comments to make regarding the pig industry which has passed through many vicissitudes. It is an industry that fluctuates in prices and in the demand for various types of its commodities. I have endeavoured for over two years to get the Commonwealth Government to realise that one thing necessary for the stimulation of production in the industry is stability of prices over a period, and the guaranteed price we sought has at last been granted after very strenuous efforts.

In that connection I want to pay a tribute to the efforts of the Under Secretary for Agriculture who has unstintingly and untiringly assisted me in very many endeavours to secure the completion of those negotiations. Another matter in which he has been very active—he works in close association with all agricultural problems apparent in this State—has been his endeavour to get for the poultry industry much better consideration. I am very pleased to say that during the past 12 months the construction of the egg-drying plant—the first to be established in Australia—was completed in Western Australia. That plant has resulted in taking 30,500 cases of eggs from the market at a price to the growers that is comparable with the pre-war price parity. The poultry industry is allied to many others in an agricultural sense. The demand for mill offal for the industry is such that, in spite of the very considerably increased orders for flour from abroad, Western Australia will consume almost the whole of the offal procurable as a result of the large flour export orders. One worrying phase associated with the industry has been the almost entire absence of meat meals which constitute an essential requisite in the successful production of eggs. We are taking steps to endeavour to overcome the present serious position.

I think it is en incumbent upon me to refer to the splendid services rendered by the officers of the Veterinary Branch. They probably saved the State from dire tragedy early in this year in connection with swine fever. Their work on the wharf is not

very well known, but, without disclosing what might have happened, I think it safe to say that these officers have saved the State from time to time from dire tragedies arising from scourges that could easily follow from the visits to our shores of boats that otherwise would not be permitted to come here. I refer particularly to stock of types that would not be allowed to enter our waters in peace-time. Only by their extreme vigilance have these men been able to maintain the position in this State in a degree of safety.

One step taken during the past 12 or 18 months, largely due to war considerations, has been the catering for students at the Denmark research station. So successful was the move that although we had to embark upon it as an emergency, plans have been approved for the perpetuation of the system so that our agricultural students will be able to continue having the benefit of experience in a different form of agriculture from that which they would normally obtain at Narrogin. We feel it is likely to provide for the South-Western portion of the State the type of agricultural education that is typical and peculiar to that portion of Western Australia. Much work has continued in connection with the minor elements and other deficiency problems of that character, all of which have received the attention of the nutrition officers as well as those of the veterinary branch. Reference to work done in the past needs no repetition in this Chamber, and there is no doubt that the effect of the attention given to many of these minor factors will prove of major importance in dealing with problems that lie ahead.

I do not think it necessary for me to cover the wide range of industries and subjects handled not merely because of circumstances arising out of the war but in connection with the planning that we are engaged upon for the post-war period, and in an endeavour to meet anticipated needs to cope with the requirements of the State. I think it is hardly necessary on these Estimates to cover the full wide range of projects that are receiving constant attention. Irrigation and drainage, the fruit industry and all those activities that engage the attention of various branches of the department continuously are all viewed from the standpoint of our endeavours to anticipate immediate post-war needs. With a view to the future we have set up a committee as between

the four departments in the State to which all allied problems will be referred. We have, in addition, a ministerial alliance between three or four departments, and we have the chief administrative officers in the Departments of Agriculture, Lands, Forests and Works dealing with and scrutinising problems associated with the land to whom all relevant matters are submitted for discussion before being finally approved. We are finding that this has stimulated an inter-departmental interest and obviates any conflict when decisions ultimately have to be reached. I must also speak in the highest terms of the services rendered and the loyalty shown by all officers and staff of the Agricultural Department.

I should like to offer a few remarks on what might be anticipated immediately following the cessation of hostilities. I think there will be an immediate demand for tremendous quantities of foodstuffs to relieve starving millions of people in more than one country of the world. Surely one of the first considerations, if we hope to build on the devastated ruins of Europe, should be to endeavour to satisfy the food requirements of those many millions of men, women and children who today are on starvation rations! It is a dangerous illusion to foster that as soon as the war ends there will be normality in production of and demand for foodstuffs, that food will flow from the countries producing it, that cattle will be immediately available from the Argentine and Australia, and that the dairy farmers of Australia and Denmark will immediately function to meet the world's demands. I suggest that there will be a very serious period to face during which there will be in many countries, including Australia, a serious shortage of some of the commodities that come from primary production.

Mr. Patrick: Denmark's production has been largely destroyed.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The adjustments and problems confronting us in order to meet the productive requirements of the world need much consideration at this stage. Not merely will it be that shipping will not be available, but there will be competition within the shipping available for all sorts of commodities essential to many of the major industries of the world. It will not merely mean that foodstuffs will have priority; there will also be a necessity to carry commodities that are

of economic importance to many parts of the world.

Mr. Boyle: Did the Hot Springs Conference lay down a plan?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not know whether the hon. member has seen any report of the conference. If not, I will shortly be in a position to furnish him with particulars that I have received. To me it was a most disappointing conference.

Mr. Patrick: Rather indefinite.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Very indefinite. Instead of proceeding in stages, first evolving or formulating a plan, it seemed to me that the conference attempted to reach the second stage of endeavouring to put a plan into operation. It is very necessary to face the many problems that are to be associated with the feeding of the world in the post-war period.

Although I had hoped—and I regret my omission—to refer on the Estimates of the Lands Department to the vexed problem of land utilisation, I may say I can foresee that, unless hard work with much thought is devoted to the problems of food production, we shall have serious conditions arising in the immediate post-war period. I think the member for Murchison agrees that there will be, too, a condition of money chaos. Some countries will have no money; all that they will have in the way of assets will be labour and natural resources. The people with whom they will wish to trade also will have no money but will have material that the other people might not need. So, while payment in gold will be impossible, payment in goods, too, might be unwelcome.

In my view there are many problems that will very quickly arise once endeavours are made to meet the production demands of the world in the circumstances immediately following the war. The period of dislocation in endeavouring to get men back into industry will not be of short duration and, the adjustments that must of necessity be made will require the best brains of the world to curtail that period. I believe that the crop prospects in many countries have sadly shrunk and that the meat position will also be in a state of chaos. No matter how we plan, it is essential that, in every endeavour to meet war requirements, thought be given to anticipating what the effect of undue stimulation in one sphere will be on an allied form of production in another

section of rural industry. I do not wish unduly to prolong the discussion on these Estimates. I regret that I did not say some of the things I had in mind on the Lands Estimates.

Mr. Patrick: Could not you give us the information on these Estimates?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am afraid the Chairman would not permit me, having in mind the celerity of which the Leader of the Opposition spoke.

Mr. Patrick: It is an allied subject.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: When we consider what is to be a general stocktaking—basically it is a general stocktaking in regard to land available—included in that stocktaking must of necessity be to just what uses economically the land can be put. Speaking from an Australian aspect, I am much concerned at the abuse the better land of Australia has received in the past. Australia, with only about one per cent. of its land cultivated, has not very many large areas, if any, still in the hands of the Crown to be drawn upon for any post-war rural settlement. We have evidences at Atherton in Queensland, at Dorrigo in New South Wales, and Gippsland in Victoria, to show exactly what faults there are in hastily conceived plans of agricultural settlement.

There are millions of acres of land in Australia that have been cleared of natural timbers, much of it prime forest, so steep that within 15 years of the original felling of the timber, serious erosion has taken place and there is evidence that endeavours to rectify soil problems have been absolutely futile. The result is that, in the eastern portion of Australia, we have very serious problems. I know from evidence before a Commonwealth Royal Commission that five States are very emphatic in declaring that there is no prospect of agricultural settlement on lands remaining in the possession of the Crown.

Mr. Seward: Is the trouble in Gippsland serious?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It is serious because of bracken and other pests that cannot successfully be dealt with by any known form of implement. It seems that in every State where land has been treated for agriculture that is so steep that implements cannot be used is, within our present knowledge at least, doomed to very serious and heart-burning failure. I am

concerned also with the scarcity of lands in the heavy rainfall belts of Australia, with very few exceptions, although relatively the south-western portion of Australia offers, as far as my knowledge goes, one of the best prospects within Australia of increasing our agricultural population.

If members are interested in a study of this subject I would commend to them that excellent book by Forsyth, of the Melbourne University, entitled "The Myth of Open Spaces," which shows in a remarkable way just how little prospect there is in Australia of using much more of the land agriculturally than has been settled or occupied in Australia's first 125 years. The open spaces remaining to us are not those vast spaces in the areas of 10-inch rainfall or under. They are the open spaces that are left in the region of rainfalls of 35 inches and upwards. It is useless to suggest that we are to populate or perish if the areas available to us to populate densely are the areas in the rainfall of 10 inches and under. I think if we had not gone into some of our land settlement schemes with so much enthusiasm, we would be a less impoverished country than we are. That also is a subject upon which we can derive much benefit from history if we learn from the records available to us. If we take from 1828 onwards in this country we find that the earliest explorers as well as the explorers of the present day have written for us, perhaps unconsciously, the limits that are prescribed geographically as well as topographically of land settlement in Australia.

MR. BOYLE (Avon): I listened with a great deal of interest to the exposition by the Minister for Agriculture of the various problems that beset the industry. This is a time when, in my opinion, petty differences will have to be submerged, because unquestionably we face a world the countries in which will have tremendous food troubles within the next few years. There are today in Europe forces of destruction that have reduced highly productive countries to absolute poverty. The Minister mentioned the question of payment for goods as between countries. I am sure that the agreement between the "Big Two," Churchill and Roosevelt, in conjunction, of course, with the Soviet Republic, for a 20-years pact after the war carries more than we imagine. It carries within it an attempted solution of the

problem that the Minister foresees. I fail to understand why in a country like this there should be any restrictions other than those imposed by lack of labour or lack of a commodity such as superphosphate in the production of what we can produce in quantity.

I was intensely disappointed today to read a certain paragraph in "The West Australian." Last night we passed a motion, which is an expression of opinion by this Legislative Assembly, to remove restrictions from the production of wheat in Western Australia, and especially that one restriction, unnecessary to my mind, which was imposed by the Commonwealth Government—largely, I believe, on account of transport and accumulation of wheat at the time. Mr. Scully mentioned today that he had no present intention of removing wheat restrictions, because in his opinion within the framework of the restricted areas sufficient wheat could be produced. He mentioned that the wheat accumulated here will disappear after the war. I ventured to predict that the accumulation of wheat in Australia will disappear long before the war is finished. It is disappearing now.

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: Will he act on advice?

Mr. BOYLE: He may act on advice, but he finds himself in an unfortunate position with respect to his own particular area and his own particular State. Mr. Scully is alleged to have evolved a certain plan. Of course it was really evolved about five or six years ago by Mr. Robertson, a very thoughtful farmer in New South Wales, for the benefit of the particular State in which he resides. Here in Western Australia it had the effect of giving the farmers a guaranteed price for portion of their wheat. I was in firm agreement with that plan, but it was limited to 3,000 bushels. That was the Robertson plan of five or six years ago—3,000 bushels to be paid for at the rate of 4s. per bushel. We have, as the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe has said, in Mr. Scully a Minister who may take advice from others than those near to him in New South Wales, because New South Wales is a State where there are more small producers than are to be found in any other State of the Commonwealth.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: There has been too much Wilson!

Mr. BOYLE: Of 19,000 growers in New South Wales there are about 6,000, or 33 per cent., who do not grow more than 100 acres of wheat a year. Members can see that especially in Mr. Scully's own electorate—and I do not insinuate that that was the main motive—there would be those particular growers assured of a maximum price of 4s. because they never at any time produced even within the vicinity of 3,000 bushels. In this State of Western Australia, as our Minister has pointed out, we have wheat produced on a commercial basis. That was the original intention, and it worked out that way. I have here Western Australia's figures ranging from 1910 to 1941 as regards wheat production—

Year.	Acreage.	Million bushels.
1910	500,000	6
1923	1,600,000	18
1930	4,000,000	53
1939	3,000,000	40

Thanks to the restrictions imposed we had in 1942-43 1,700,000 acres producing 19,000,000 bushels of wheat.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Wilson advised on that. We should get someone nearer home.

Mr. BOYLE: Why is the hon. member worrying about Wilson?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I am not worrying about him.

Mr. BOYLE: I know Alec. Wilson pretty well. He is not a bad chap.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: He made a blunder. Do not blame Scully.

Mr. BOYLE: I regret it if the telegram to which I referred conveys Mr. Scully's opinion that the restrictions should not be removed now.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: A little steadying by Scully will do us good.

Mr. BOYLE: The hon. member is a farmer himself and must realise that we cannot get back into our previous wheat-growing under a period of three years.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I cannot read the future, nor can anybody else at present.

Mr. BOYLE: I can see this for the future—that, as the Minister pointed out, money will not enter into the matter. The people of the world have to be fed and far-seeing men have entered into a compact to provide for future food requirements as they have provided for this war. I think the Chairman will be in agreement with me on this point.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: We will not reach that stage next season.

Mr. BOYLE: No.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Why not steady up for the time being?

Mr. BOYLE: This is the time when we should be preparing.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: So we are.

Mr. BOYLE: As I said, we cannot get into wheat production again in a period under three years.

The Minister for Mines: Have a five-year plan.

Mr. BOYLE: I think it will work out that way. However, I shall not continue this desultory discussion. I draw the Minister's attention to the fact that farmers, pig-raisers and stockmen in the South-West are told that they can purchase wheat at 3s. 3½d a bushel, but they can only get it at that price in 10-ton lots at the nearest point of distribution. Bagged-wheat is not available for these people. That is the trouble. It is a pity to buoy up their hopes in that way. I do not blame the Minister, because it is a matter for the Australian Wheat Board, which should have tackled it long ago. The farmers who could take a 10-ton truck of wheat costing £60 or £70 are few and far between.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The idea is that they should combine.

Mr. BOYLE: Imagine a scattered lot of small farmers at a South-West siding combining to get a 10-ton truck of wheat and trying to shift it! It would be like shifting sand. Surely bagged-wheat ought to be available so that the wheat could be removed conveniently from the sidings! I also draw attention to the grasshopper menace, which is ever present in this State. I notice the Minister has placed £18,000 on the Estimates this year to combat the pest. It is a pity the Government will not keep up a steady pressure against the menace. I have received a complaint from one road board that ploughing was done at the wrong time of year to be effective against the pest. The grasshoppers are an ever-present menace on our eastern fringes. Many good farmers in that district who weathered droughts and troubles of all kinds have been routed finally by the grasshopper pest. Only those who have seen the pest at work can really understand what it means.

Mr. J. Hegney: The grasshoppers are bad around the metropolitan area today. They eat the grass.

Mr. BOYLE: That is another problem for the Minister to solve. I saw a square mile of wheat utterly destroyed in three days by this pest. I venture the opinion that in a period of three years the damage done by the pest in the eastern fringe involved a loss of £250,000, apart from the destruction of the continuity of settlement in those areas. I am, therefore, pleased indeed to see that the Minister has provided £18,000 this year, in lieu of the miserable £500 which was provided in the Estimates two years ago and which was hopelessly inadequate. If such a thing were possible, I would prefer to see a standing vote provided to wage a continual war against this pest, which the member for Middle Swan says is now attacking the metropolitan area. Apparently he has fears for his lawns!

The Minister for Mines: He is thinking of snails!

Mr. BOYLE: Is that so? Whether snails or grasshoppers, he is entitled to protection.

Mr. J. Hegney: I have many pests in my garden.

Mr. BOYLE: The Minister and his department have now tackled this job in a proper way and are deserving of commendation. I would like also to compliment the Minister on the remarkably fine officials in the Department of Agriculture. During a journey of 4,000 or 5,000 miles with a reconstruction committee I never heard in conversation one complaint made against the departmental officials as far as their work was concerned. I did hear many complaints about housing accommodation and the shortage of equipment to carry on work.

The Minister for Agriculture: Were most of the complaints about the Minister?

Mr. BOYLE: No. I do not think it right for a member of Parliament to discuss a Minister with a Government official. I prefer to deal with the Minister from platforms at public meetings.

The Minister for Agriculture: I was referring to the public.

Mr. BOYLE: We should in this State concentrate upon the production of food. Western Australia is prone to have cycles of seasons. The present season is one of the best the State has experienced.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You are right.

The Minister for Agriculture: The season at Northampton is bad.

Mr. BOYLE: Immediately I start to speak about a good season, I hear what Sir John Forrest called the "croakers." Because Geraldton and Mullewa are having a bad season, the rest of the State must also be having a bad season!

Hon. W. D. Johnson: We are having a glorious time in the eastern wheat-belt.

Mr. BOYLE: The season is also good in the South-Western and the Great Southern districts.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That is customary in those districts.

Mr. BOYLE: The portion of the State not enjoying a good season from an agricultural point of view is the area from Geraldton to Morawa. I am glad that I can cordially agree with the Minister in his views concerning our being able to supply the world with foodstuffs. The Minister has expressed opinions with which I find myself in cordial agreement, though how long that cordial agreement will last, I do not know. However, in this connection, just as in connection with the war, we must stand behind whoever is endeavouring to do the job and see that the men who are undertaking it have every facility to do so.

MR. HILL (Albany): I should like to pay tribute to one of the most efficient departments in Australia—our Agricultural Department. I hope that one of the first jobs undertaken after the war will be to supply a building worthy of the work done by that department. Three years ago today I arrived in Melbourne from Brisbane. In travelling from Brisbane I wanted to see the north-coast country of New South Wales. I must admit that I saw it at its very worst, at the tail end of a very severe drought. As I travelled along that country I could not help comparing it with the south-west of our State. What struck me was the enormous amount necessary to provide that country with transport facilities. I travelled over the bridge on the Hawkesbury River.

Mr. J. Hegney: That is a pretty place.

Mr. HILL: A very pretty place; and the people are very proud of their bridge. It has the deepest pile in the world, extending to 160 ft. At present the Government is spending £1,250,000 to replace that bridge. I was very pleased to hear the Minister refer to the potentialities of the south-west portion of this State. I wish I had that

£1,250,000 to provide transport facilities for our South-West. There would not be very much left to provide. I am not going to say that the south-west of our State is a Garden of Eden. Nature is never 100 per cent. perfect. In the South-West, however, we have a very good and even climate. Our deficiency seems to be a shortage of minor elements. To deal with that shortage is a full-time and continuous job for our Agricultural Department, and the members of that department deserve the greatest credit for the way in which they are tackling the job.

We had the Denmark wasting disease. That was due to a shortage of cobalt. I believe that 1 oz. is sufficient for 40 cows for 12 months. We have to thank the Agricultural Department for the work done in connection with that disease. Another disease not in my district but further west was the dropping disease. I understand that was due to a deficiency of copper. In my own district wonderful results have been obtained in potato crops by the application of a few lbs. of copper applied with manure. Pastures have been improved by the same element. One man who is doing a wonderful work for this State is Dr. Teakle, and he has the wholehearted support of the rest of the department. Many years ago I was one of the members of the first land development committee appointed at Albany. At our early meetings I suggested that for the development of agriculture in that end of the State we needed to encourage the dairy industry. I still hold to that view.

Associated with dairying is pig-raising. With me at that time was associated a former officer of the Agricultural Department. Last week that gentleman passed on and joined the great majority. I refer to the late Mr. A. C. Vaughan. He was an officer of the department for many years. About 35 years ago he played no small part in keeping the fruit industry of this State free from imported pests. In association with our land committee he became what I might call a pasture crank. We want a few more cranks like the late Mr. A. C. Vaughan! By a happy coincidence, the present Minister for Agriculture arrived at Albany on the afternoon when we fruit-growers were saying farewell to Mr. Vaughan as our fruit inspector. Another gentleman who also passed away within the last few days is Mr. E. Balston. For many

years that gentleman suffered very bad health, but years ago he contributed in no small degree to the land development which has taken place at my end of the State.

I was very pleased indeed to hear that it was intended to carry on with the Denmark School of Agriculture. There is ample room for both the Denmark and Narrogin Schools of Agriculture. If there is a nicer spot in Western Australia than Denmark I would like to see it. It is an ideal place for the school. There is a beautiful climate, and the school will be on the banks of the river where the boys can enjoy both boating and swimming. It is close to the sea coast, and the boys who attend the school will be in very happy surroundings. I am confident that that school will not be established at the expense of the Narrogin School of Agriculture. Both schools are necessary in this State. I draw attention to the condition of the buildings at the Denmark experimental farm, with which is associated the School of Agriculture. I sincerely hope the Minister will see that as soon as the time is opportune the buildings are brought up-to-date, and we shall then have what will be one of the best schools of agriculture in this State.

MR. J. HEGNEY (Middle Swan): It was a real pleasure to listen to the arresting and lucid speech delivered by the Minister for Agriculture. He gave us a very keen insight into the various industries that come under his administration, and also prognosticated what the future would bring in respect to primary production in this State. I am interested in a number of primary-producing industries in my electorate. I was sorry to hear that the dried fruits industry is facing a difficult period. A number of people are engaged in producing dried fruits in my district and have enjoyed a reasonable standard of living therefrom. It is unfortunate that they are facing a difficult period. I feel that if there could be a certain amount of organisation—what Country Party members are pleased to call orderly marketing—the consumption of dried fruits could be considerably increased and these products could be made available to consumers at reasonable prices. Consumers have difficulty in getting supplies of dried fruit.

An increased consumption of apples has taken place to some extent as a result of

the operations of the Apple and Pear Board, which has taken apples to the consumers. The increased consumption of this fruit may also be due to the fact that citrus fruits are difficult to obtain. I feel certain that so far as this industry is concerned there would be increased consumption if the product could be supplied to the consumers at a fair and reasonable price—one lower than that prevailing today. We hear criticism in regard to the control of apples because they are left to rot on the ground. Orchardists are unable to give them away while many workers and children cannot get them. It is an economic peculiarity to find that in the midst of plenty so far as apples are concerned we have starvation. Apples at 7d. and 7½d. per lb., and with four apples to the lb., are prohibitive to workers' families. The same applies to oranges. We have to pay 3d. each for them and when they are peeled there is little left. I wish to say a word or two on the dried fruits industry. If the member for Toodyay were present he could speak with greater authority because he represents most of the dried fruit producers in the State. I represent a number at Caversham and Swan View. I am sorry to learn that they are in for a difficult period.

Mr. Patrick: That is after the war.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: We will probably be facing that difficulty before very long. Another matter in which I am interested is that of poultry raising. A number of poultry farmers operate in the Middle Swan district. I have had the opportunity to visit their farms from time to time and I know that, like other farmers, they experience great difficulties in getting supplies of various kinds. The Minister pointed out the trouble facing them in connection with meat-meal. They also have difficulty in obtaining supplies of cod-liver oil which they use in the food. I have heard a great deal of criticism from the poultry farmers in my electorate about the control of egg production. They point out that a few months ago they had the opportunity to vote on the question as to whether they would have an egg control board established and, by an overwhelming majority, they decided against it. They complain that now they have an egg control board foisted on them. I think that if this control system and the reason for its existence were properly understood there

would not be the same opposition from certain quarters that we find today.

Many people object because they have to license their poultry if they have more than 20 laying hens, and make a contribution of 1½d. per dozen eggs to the department. I discussed this matter with Mr. Baron-Hay, Under Secretary for Agriculture. I suggested that a short pamphlet enumerating the reasons for this innovation and for the levy, etc., should be published. If that were done and the position understood by all concerned the opposition encountered in certain quarters would break down. Much of it is due to the fact that the Australia-wide point of view is not understood. The Commonwealth authorities are suggesting that people should go in for more backyard production of poultry with a view to producing eggs, and also providing meat. That is a sound and sensible suggestion, but those who make it overlook the fact that it is difficult to get wire-netting, and impossible to get a sheet of iron with which to build a shed. Some people who are anxious to get iron have obtained a release for it, but it is unobtainable. It is practically impossible to know when it will be available.

The Minister for Mines: There is no phenyle for the stick-fast flea either.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: I know that the Minister for Mines is a specialist in gladioli culture and the raising of dahlias, etc. but I can assure him that the stick-fast flea is very easily overcome by the releasing of cement. If concrete floors are constructed the poultry farmers are not worried by the stick-fast flea. It is necessary in the metropolitan area that the poultry yards should be kept clean, and the only way to do that is to follow the directions of the advisory officer of the department in the use of these things. There is a real shortage of galvanised iron. I am advised by merchants that it is available in the Eastern States, but that there are difficulties in the way of making it available in Western Australia. Representations to try to secure releases of iron for Western Australia were made to the Commonwealth Minister, Senator Fraser, but none has come to this State. I respectfully suggest to the Minister for Agriculture that he makes some advances along these lines to the Commonwealth Minister with a view to securing the release of some corrugated iron

The Minister mentioned pig production which certainly went through a severe time recently when swine fever decimated many herds. The period of rehabilitation is now in progress. Numbers of pig producers in my electorate have dropped out of pig production because of various difficulties. Some complain that they did not get sufficient compensation, and hence have switched over to other forms of farming. Certainly the swine fever attacked the pig industry in a severe manner and caused a great loss to the State. I will now deal with some of the pests mentioned by the member for Avon. I can say with truth that the locust pest in the metropolitan area is very bad. I know people who go in for dahlia cultivation, and in the middle of summer the young plants are absolutely destroyed by this insect. It has not yet gone as far as Leederville which suffers from another pest that comes from the sea.

The latest introduction is what is known as the cabbage butterfly. It only came to Western Australia in 1943 but it is a real curse. My father, who lives in Midland Junction, grew a fair sized crop of cabbages and potatoes. The first time he saw this pest he did not know what it was. When I saw his crops of cauliflowers and cabbages I was amazed at the decimation that had taken place. That butterfly is very prolific in the metropolitan area today, and I have no doubt that it is increasing. This means that the work of the producers of cauliflowers and cabbages will be more difficult in the future. They will have to spray continually to keep it under control. These pests, like the lucerne flea, red mite, etc., are foreign importations.

I have heard members speaking about the fox menace, which is a real one to poultry farmers even as close as five miles to Perth. In one night recently at South Belmont a poultry farmer lost over 100 head of poultry. On the outskirts of the metropolitan district around Wanneroo and other centres where formerly stray foxes used to make their appearance they are now to be found in greater numbers. In fact, they are within five or six miles of the centre of the city and possibly the time will come when they will be seen about Perth itself.

Mr. Watts: Then we will start hunting.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: As a matter of fact, the Leader of the Opposition reminds me

that some of the growers attribute the increase in the number of foxes to the fact that the Hunt Club which formerly engaged in weekly gallops after the pests, is not functioning during the war period. Many growers think that the work of the Hunt Club kept down the depredations of foxes to a minimum. We should encourage the growth of the small-farm system adjacent to the city. Propaganda has been indulged in from time to time advocating that the workers should take up small holdings on which they could utilise their spare time. I think the Minister would do well to encourage that project, for it would help the workers to improve the standard of their living and assist them to make a small competence. What we want is a virile husbandry.

MR. PATRICK (Greenough): I was pleased to listen to the very informative address by the Minister, who traversed the various branches of agriculture in which his department is functioning. I would like to voice my appreciation of the splendid work being carried out by his officers.

The **CHAIRMAN**: Order! There is too much talking.

Member: All right!

The **CHAIRMAN**: The member for Greenough will resume his seat. I want to remind members of the Committee that when I call for order I expect the Chair to be obeyed.

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: If you talk properly, Mr. Chairman, you will be obeyed!

The **CHAIRMAN**: There has been a tremendous amount of conversation going on during the whole evening, and I have had to call for order on two or three occasions. Scemingly, some members of the Committee are not prepared to give obedience to the Chair. I warn members that I do not intend to keep on calling for order. If the present procedure continues, I will take action. The member for Greenough may proceed.

Mr. **PATRICK**: There have been occasions on which I have disagreed with actions taken by officers of the Agricultural Department, such as, for instance, their attempt to tie farmers down to the use of a definite amount of superphosphate on their land. I am pleased to say that this year farmers are being allowed to exercise their judgment

regarding the quantity of superphosphate they apply to their land. As a matter of fact, I do not think the officers were very happy in connection with that particular advice because it was in direct conflict with that which they had been tendering to farmers over a series of years. As I have said on previous occasions, what we need is a better understanding of the economics of agriculture. We certainly can produce the goods, but the problem is at the same time to provide a reasonable standard of living for those engaged in their production. I think it would be well if the Commonwealth Government studied some remarks of President Wilson during the 1914-18 war.

As we know, the Commonwealth Government has compulsorily acquired certain agricultural products. In our Constitution just as it is in the American Constitution, it is laid down that the Commonwealth Government can compulsorily acquire commodities on what is termed "a just price." The whole point is to secure a definition of "a just price." The same term is used in the American Constitution. During the earlier war, when speaking in July, 1917, President Wilson said—

A just price must be paid for everything the Government buys. By a just price I mean a price which will sustain the industries concerned in a high state of efficiency, provide a living for those who conduct them, enable them to pay good wages and make possible the expansion of their enterprises. It is just as much our duty to sustain the industries of the country, the industries that contribute to its life, as it is to sustain our Forces on the land, on the sea and in the air.

I think that is a very fair definition of a just price and I do not think that up to date we have received such a price in Australia. In Great Britain farmers receive what might be regarded as a just price for all agricultural products and that has led to an enormous expansion in agriculture there. The Minister seemed to think there would be great difficulty in the post-war period in expanding the production of foodstuffs, but I believe it is largely a question of economics. Great Britain is a rich agricultural country, but as was pointed out by a speaker over the B.B.C. the other day—I did not think that the difference was as much as he indicated—the pre-war British farmer grew only enough foodstuffs to feed the British public for 1½ days in a week,

whereas last year he grew enough to feed the public for 4½ days a week, while this year it is expected that the farm produce grown will be sufficient to feed the British public for six days in each week. That serves to indicate the enormous expansion that has taken place in Britain in the production of foodstuffs. If that had not been accomplished there is no doubt that what Germany anticipated would have occurred, and the British people would possibly have been starved into subjection.

As one British farmer pointed out, the war has made a tremendous difference to agriculture in Britain in view of the fact that the growers are now getting an economic price for their products. One agriculturist remarked that in the pre-war period he had a certain area of land of which he cropped only a small proportion. It did not pay him to cultivate the rest, so he confined himself to a small proportion of the holding where the soil was of the highest quality. He said the experience was that the more they expanded production the more they lost money and got into debt. To show how good farming has assisted production, following on the giving of an economic price, it is only necessary to point out that the pre-war wheat average in Great Britain was 33 bushels to the acre, which is one of the highest in the world. The Minister for Agriculture there stated that today the ordinary farmer produces 40 bushels to the acre; a large number produce over 50 bushels, and some of the best farmers over 80 bushels to the acre. That has been accomplished in wartime, and it shows what an enormous expansion can be made in agriculture, provided those engaged in it receive an economic return for their work. We hear a lot in Australia about the need for decentralisation. This farmer said—

This huge business, admittedly in low water, in spite of the fact that it was split into thousands of little businesses, astonished not only its critics but itself. All this was a triumph for decentralisation. Suggestions were received from Whitehall, but they were carried out by local farmers' committees in every district.

That is, the farmers themselves, without any form of centralisation, managed to expand their own production. Decentralisation in a small country like Great Britain is very different from decentralisation in a country

of the area of Australia. This vote deals with the most important of all industries. As President Roosevelt remarked at the Hot Springs conference—

Agriculture—the most basic of all human activities; agriculture—the most basic of all human needs!

Here is something that will surprise most people. It was pointed out at the conference that twice as many people on the earth are engaged in agriculture as in all the other industries combined. This, of course, does not apply to British communities, but it shows the enormous proportion of the people on the earth who get a living from agriculture. Yet, in spite of the fact that two-thirds of the people of the world in pre-war times were engaged in agriculture, there has never been enough production to meet reasonable, adequate and decent consumption needs. That is why, apart altogether from the destruction occasioned in Europe by the war, there is need throughout the world for an enormous expansion in agriculture if the people of the various countries are to be decently fed, and why there is need after the war for international action if the ideal of freedom from want is to be attained.

From a world point of view, restrictions of any kind on the production of foodstuffs are very difficult to justify. It is almost impossible to justify them today. The member for Guildford-Midland made some reference to restriction of wheat production. He referred to the fact that the Primary Producers' Association at one time advocated restriction. When that restriction was advocated, we were not passing through a period of war. It occurred when surpluses were piling up all over the world. As I stated the other evening, if a manufacturer were asked to make 100,000 pairs of boots, or indeed any other article, and there was no chance of selling them he would tell the man preferring the request to go to the hot place. It would have been madness to go on expanding production when there was no market for the commodity. But we are in a very different position today. There has been an enormous wastage of foodstuffs and, if we are going to get back to sane economics, there will be an absolute necessity not only for expansion after the war but also for piling up surpluses during the

war in order to relieve hungry people when the conflict is over.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly): I congratulate the Minister upon the clear and concise manner in which he reviewed the agricultural industry of the State. This has been our experience of him ever since he has occupied that office, not that he always tells us pleasant things, but what he says is always clear and informative. There is one matter on which I have been in communication with the Minister and his Under Secretary, and that is in regard to butter rationing. I have endeavoured to get farm butter excluded from the rationing scheme. I should not like the Minister to imagine that I have so acted because I in any way object to rationing. The desire of all of us is to assist in every way possible to increase the quantity of butter exported to England, whose people have suffered considerably. We have not suffered any inconvenience whatever as compared with what they have had to submit to. I am convinced, however, that the system in vogue is not going to help in achieving what would be possible.

The Minister has told us how the export of butter has increased. If the rationing of butter were in the hands of the Minister's own department, which is thoroughly conversant with local conditions, I believe it would be carried out in such a way that the present considerable loss, in fact absolute waste of farm butter, would be prevented.

I was speaking to a farmer the other day and he told me that five pounds of the butter made weekly on his farm is fed to the dog, simply because he cannot dispose of it profitably. As I informed the Minister, the three stores in Pingelly this week displayed notices intimating that they could not take farm butter because they were unable to dispose of it. That is one aspect of the matter which I should like to see cleared up. For the month of July the production of farm butter declined by 88 per cent.

The Minister for Agriculture: I have written to the Commonwealth Minister on the subject.

Mr. SEWARD: The Under Secretary showed me the letter and also the reply. I, too, have been writing to the Minister—I have accumulated quite a file—and my reply was the same. He said he was referring the matter to the Deputy Director in the hope that he would make some arrangement. But

the Deputy Director merely wrote to the effect that he could not accept either of the suggestions I had made, and that everything would work out all right. So far as I can judge, it is working out all wrong. There is another aspect of the matter to which I wish to direct the Minister's attention. On frequent occasions when I have spoken to the butcher, he has shown me the heads of pedigreed stock that have been slaughtered for meat. He said it was a cruel shame to kill such stock for meat, and I agree with him. The position is that farmers are drying off their cows because there is no market for farm butter, and they are selling their pedigreed stock to the butchers. That is most unfortunate in view of the work the department has done in past years in promoting the breed of farm dairy cattle and the success in the department's efforts in that direction.

Those are two matters I commend to the attention of our unification friends. If the control were in the hands of our Agricultural Department, very much better results would be obtained. Closely allied is the question of superphosphate supplies. I was again pleased to hear what the Minister had to say on that subject this evening. I have heard during the last few weeks rumours that we are likely to have an augmented supply of super. I have not repeated those rumours, as I would not like to encourage belief in them lest they should prove ill-founded. I know, however, that the Minister would not make the statement he made this evening unless he had very good grounds for it. I shall be very guarded in my statements to any farmer I may meet, but I shall advise him not to give up all hope that there might be some additional superphosphate during the coming year.

With regard to top-dressing, I wish the Minister were not so very busy. Some time ago I asked him to visit a property on which today are being shorn 8,000 sheep on 3,000 acres, or a little over. This property is verging on, in fact absolutely adjoining forest land. In spite of the smallness of the area, the use of superphosphate has enabled that property now to shear 8,000 sheep. I shall renew my efforts to arrange for the Minister to inspect that place when he is in that area. The low-lying damp country in the Great Southern district will,

in my opinion, be revolutionised in future years by top-dressing.

The use of strychnine for rabbit-poisoning is rather a delicate topic. If the department handles the business and it does not go right, it is immediately condemned. A large quantity of strychnine, more than a year's supply, has come in and has disappeared. Better methods are important to the farming community, to prevent indiscriminate distribution. When the member for Middle Swan was talking about foxes and mentioned that the hunt club was not functioning as it might be, I immediately thought of my own hunt club. However, my club, unlike that of the member for Middle Swan, which hunts with dogs, hunts with guns. Now, a farmer can only get 25 ordinary cartridges, or 50 of the smaller size—namely, twenty-twos—per annum. Valuable sheep and stud ewes are being killed by foxes and wild dogs, but we cannot cope with them at the rate of 25 cartridges a year. I ask the Minister to use his influence with the military authorities for the supply of a larger number of cartridges. It would assist at all events in dealing with the fox trouble.

I was also pleased when the Minister mentioned that a veterinary class had been established at the Narrogin School. I maintain that no agricultural college is complete without such a class. In view of the fact that the department has officers conducting field work and experiments I point out that, if the field work and experiments could be carried out at the school, it would be of inestimable value to the students in their after life. I have seen the Chief Veterinary Officer on the subject in past years, but this is the first word of encouragement I have received. Veterinary surgeons, I may remark, do not grow on bushes. They are very hard indeed to get, and so, if a farmer experiences trouble with his stock and has a knowledge of veterinary work, he has something to compensate him for his inability to secure the services of a veterinary surgeon. I thank the Minister for his very informative and full address on the Agricultural Department.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan): Like other members, I listened with much interest to the remarks of the various speakers. I realise that without agricultural progress

this country must become bankrupt—which implies that our merchants and our manufacturers will become bankrupt and that insolvency will be general. Comparatively, our country areas are great; yet unfortunately population in the country is declining. The latest figures available are those for 1941, and they show a decline of 3,000 in rural population.

The Minister for Mines: Do those figures include the Goldfields?

Mr. SAMPSON: I am not counting the Goldfields. I am sure that if we had the figures of today they would disclose a far greater decrease. We have heard previously of how shockingly the dairying industry has been treated; how first-grade stud cattle are being slaughtered; instances of that have been given. We know that dairies are being carried on by wives and children of men who have enlisted for war service. The dairying industry is a most important one, and anything that has the effect of bringing about a decrease in production is greatly to be deplored. I am looking forward to the time when country workers will secure a return for their labour sufficient to encourage them to remain in the country; but for a long time past that has not been the case.

The drift to the city is always increasing and that is a matter of grave concern for our agricultural industry. Years ago we spent many hours in this Chamber discussing the importance of and the need for making use of our unutilised land for agricultural purposes, but unfortunately we did not progress much beyond the talking stage. Today progress has been arrested owing to world conditions, although I admit that up till recently some progress was being made. How long it will take to rehabilitate our dairying industry depends upon how long the war continues. I was pleased to hear my Leader speak tonight about the price of honey. He certainly brings to bear on matters which he discusses a very sound judgment.

The Minister for Agriculture: How much per day does it cost to keep a bee? My colleague wishes to know.

Mr. SAMPSON: It depends upon the season. If that is good and there is a plentiful supply of nectar the cost of keeping a bee is negligible to an infinitesimal degree.

The Minister for Mines: Is the Italian bee boycotted now?

Mr. SAMPSON: The Italian bee is popular because he is, comparatively speaking, a friendly bee. Given a cleanly apiarist the Carniolian bee will cause no trouble, but bees do not like persons with an unpleasant odour.

The Minister for Mines: Are you making an implication? What is the inference?

Mr. SAMPSON: There is no implication so far as the Minister is concerned. He might have thought so for a moment, but he must not be too ready to confess to something which after all does not exist. I have now answered that question asked without notice, but I could give members some details regarding the importance of maintaining bees in good form. The nuptial flight in the life of the queen bee could be dilated upon with some interest, but I prefer to leave that to some other member who could deal with it more picturesquely and with a colour beyond my capacity. I shall not be personal, but I am inclined to think that you, Mr. Chairman, could deal interestingly with a subject that can never be exhausted, notwithstanding that many writers and speakers have dealt at length with it.

The Minister for Mines: Would he be the queen or the drone?

Mr. SAMPSON: I could never regard the Chairman as a typical drone, the bee that sacrifices its life in answer to that instinctive urge which brings about its very early death. I was about to observe, when the question without notice was asked, that the price for first-grade honey in this State is 5½d. per lb. Western Australia has a very fine reputation indeed—a world-wide reputation—for the quality of its honey. We secured in the Wembley Exhibition—certainly some time ago—first prize for honey; and I have been told on good authority that in New York we also secured first prize and at once found a market for all the honey we had available. That was before the war.

The Premier: We had the same experience with Geraldton wheat.

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes, and also with our apples. I remember there was in connection with apples grown in the southern hemisphere a competition a few years ago in London and that Mr. George Simpson, of the Rokewood Orchard, Karragullen, secured first prize for three years in succession. It was an achievement, but not so wonderful

when one realises the special ability of Mr. Simpson. The method of pruning which he instituted and carried on has had a most beneficial effect upon the products of his orchard. I am afraid, however, that an interjection rather took my thoughts away from the price of honey. Members heard tonight a letter from Sydney read by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Watts: It was from the Prices Control Department.

Mr. SAMPSON: I think it was a complementary letter to one which I received a fortnight earlier from Professor Copland.

The Minister for Mines: You had better read it to make quite sure.

Mr. SAMPSON: I have read it. Should the Minister ask me to read it again I am afraid I must refuse because of my regard for other members. The letter read by the Leader of the Opposition mentioned variations in prices, the price in Sydney being 7d., and went on to say that the variations were more apparent than real. There was no justification for that statement. I have looked up the Adelaide "Chronicle" and find that the price for the choicest honey in South Australia is 6¾d. That is very close to 7d. It is no use talking about agents' charges and so on, because the Adelaide price is only a ¼d. lower than the highest price.

Mr. Patrick: Ours is better quality.

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes, that was proved when we won the prizes at Wembley and in New York to which I referred. I was gratified to hear the generous acknowledgment made by the Minister in regard to his Under-Secretary, Mr. Baron Hay. There is no doubt that the gentleman is a wonderful officer who finds great pleasure in his work and has great capacity for handling the widely varied and difficult range of agricultural subjects he is called upon to deal with. While Mr. Baron Hay holds that office I am sure the Minister's efforts will always be buttressed. Poultry-farming is a very important industry and according to "The West Australian" the wholesale price for eggs on the 25th September was 1s. 7d.

Mr. Patrick: It is about 1s. 3½d. to the producer.

Mr. SAMPSON: Admittedly it is much less than 1s. 7d., because marketing expenses have to be met. The difficulty is that in this State today there are not the same high

prices that occurred previously or were possible during certain seasons of the year. We have some wretched thing called a ceiling price which is a one-sided, unfair price, because while there is a ceiling price and prices beyond that figure cannot be asked for, there is no ground price or what may be called a basement price. Prices may deteriorate to any point. That makes no difference. They must not go beyond a certain point. It is a good rule that works both ways. There should be a fixed price, too, when the market is over supplied, thereby giving to the producers an opportunity to make a living. This is of the utmost importance, as I am sure every member agrees. I believe in an egg board and in scientifically organised marketing. Proceeding on the catch-as-catch-can principle and doing the best possible is not the right way to carry on any industry.

Those who are engaged in agriculture should be assured of a reasonable living. They should be sure of getting the basic wage and many are a long way from that. It is because of the fact that they do not receive a reasonable return, and because there is no depending on the market, that men who are engaged on the land are shifting into Perth to take up other work. They are paid better for what they do in munition establishments. While it may be all right that workers in those factories should be paid well, it is the duty of everyone concerned to do what is possible in order that poultrymen and all primary producers should receive a living wage. Too many of them, after building up flocks and the necessary equipment, find it is no use and they throw up the job.

I noticed the other day a further reference to the difficulties which arise because of the calling-up of men engaged in producing vegetables. The cream of the labour, said one writer, has been taken out of the gardens and the labour offered as replacement is mostly unsatisfactory. We should maintain skilled labour in all branches of industry, but there is a widespread or at least a deeply-rooted idea that so far as dairymen, vegetable producers and many agriculturists are concerned, it makes no difference. However skilled they may be, if they are removed someone else can take up the work. That is entirely wrong, because no man can be a successful agricul-

turist from the standpoint of production unless he has been thoroughly trained. I doubt whether even then he will make much of a living out of it. In fact, the history of agriculture up to the present shows us how very disappointing are the results achieved. I hope there is in the mind of every member a realisation that if we are going to get anywhere with this State, and if Perth itself is to prosper, we must ensure that those engaged in agriculture are given the opportunity to secure a decent living as a result of their work.

Further, if I may say this, when we are considering education and increasing the school-going period it is very desirable that we should realise that up to the present, unfortunately, our young boyhood and girlhood have in many instances been called upon to provide cheap farm labour without which many of the primary producers would never have managed even as well or as badly as they have. We cannot say that the results, even if moderately successful in instances, can be justified when children are called upon to work before and after school. The sooner this position is altered and boys and girls are treated with proper consideration the better for all concerned. Parents are keen to do what is right but they have been caught in a position which does not permit of the consideration that they are anxious to give to their children, and accordingly the drift to the city becomes more and more pronounced.

MR. McLARTY (Murray-Wellington): Like all members who have spoken this evening I was very interested in the speech delivered by the Minister, and the facts and figures he submitted certainly gave us something to think about. I do not intend to attempt to cover the ground that he covered, but desire to touch on a few matters referred to. I was very pleased to hear him pay a tribute to those engaged in the dairying industry. I think that was a well-deserved tribute. We are in urgent need today of all dairy products, both for home consumption and for export, and I can say, and the Minister has already said, that a great many dairymen have made a most unselfish effort to maintain production. I would say that in a great many instances the effort to keep up production was not undertaken so much with a view to obtain-

ing monetary gain as from real patriotic motives. If any primary industry in this State has been hard hit as the result of manpower shortage, the Minister will agree that it is the dairy industry. We know that the Commonwealth Government provided a subsidy of £6,500,000 for this industry, and it was very acceptable. It gave heart to those engaged in it. But these men and women cannot maintain what is almost perpetual motion for an indefinite period.

Not only are the dairy farmer and his wife working seven days a week and all hours, but the children are helping as well. There comes, of course, a breaking point, and I fear that if something is not done in the way of providing additional manpower there will be a reduction in the amount of output. I know that the Minister realises the seriousness of this position and that he will help in any way possible. Through the help of the Agricultural Department valuable dairy herds have been built up, and the dairy farmers have taken a great pride in them. We know that today some of the best dairy herds in Australia are to be found in this State. We have some of the best herds in all breeds, including milking short-horns, jerseys, guernseys, and friesians. There is, however, a distinct danger that these herds will be depleted because of the impossibility of obtaining labour to carry on dairying. I do not know what can be done to help the position, but I suggest to the Minister that he should watch closely the beef market of Western Australia and the dairy stock going into it. By doing so he will get some idea of what is happening to the milking cows and the young heifers.

The Minister for Agriculture: What do you suggest we should do?

MR. McLARTY: The only help that can be given is to provide more manpower. We have been told that Australia is safe from attack, apart from possible raids. In this State are regiments which include in their personnel hundreds of young farmers. It does not appear likely that one regiment that I have in mind will leave Western Australia at present. These young men would be glad of a change from their present military duties. The Minister for Health will agree that young men kept in the Army with no prospect of getting away to a fighting front

become dissatisfied. I suggest to the Minister for Agriculture that he consult with the military authorities to see if numbers of these young men could be temporarily released.

The Minister for Agriculture: We are unceasing in our approaches, which meet with very little response.

Mr. McLARTY: I am sorry to hear that.

The Premier: They have a case on their side, too.

Mr. McLARTY: We all readily agree that the Army should not be embarrassed.

The Premier: The authorities have been wonderfully helpful in tiding us over some recent difficult circumstances in regard to slaughtering.

Mr. McLARTY: I make this suggestion: These men have been training ever since war broke out—

The Premier: The numbers are getting less and less here.

Mr. McLARTY: There are still many of them in this State and under my suggestion they could, if needed urgently, be quickly called back to camp. Meanwhile they could help in this most essential industry. The Minister compared the amount of butter which we in Australia are allowed with what is permitted in the British Isles. I have not heard many complaints in this State. I think the half pound per week that we are allowed is a very generous ration compared with what the British public is given. We all feel that we are doing something to provide the British people with an essential commodity, and we are glad to do it.

Another matter I would like to bring under the notice of the Minister is our lack of representation on the Australian Dairy Products Board. At one time we had a representative on that board, and a very good one he was, too. But today Western Australia, or the producing section of it, is without any representation. The present arrangement whereby one producer represents all the producers of South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania is, I consider, a most unsatisfactory one because the producers in this State never see their representative and I doubt if that representative has ever seen Western Australia. How can he, under those circumstances, represent the producing interests of this State? I put it to the Minister that if Western Australia is

not allowed a representative with voting powers it should at least have an opportunity to send someone who is able to listen and return and tell us what has happened.

Mr. Watts: And to speak!

Mr. McLARTY: Yes, very much, on the same lines that the member for the Northern Territory represents that portion of Australia in the Commonwealth Parliament. I hope the Minister will note that suggestion and put the proposition forward. I want to say a word about noxious weeds. There is little doubt that they are spreading. The fault lies with the policy adopted many years ago in regard to noxious weeds. Some of them now have such a hold that it is not possible to do anything with them. Take wild radish: If we had tackled that vigorously in the early stages we would not have the pest today. Watsonias are spreading everywhere. If we follow the brooks through the South-West we will see hundreds of acres of them. They are growing along the railways and on the side of the roads, and they will continue to spread. If the pest had been tackled in certain districts it would not be the curse it is today. I see much more than I like of another pest—I hope the Minister will pay particular attention to this point—because we will have tremendous losses if it continues to increase. I refer to the cape tulip.

I visited a farm some time ago and possibly if anyone who did not know anything about the weed had been there he would have said, "What a pretty field!" Certainly stock were grazing there. I spoke to the farmer and asked him if he lost many head of stock. He replied, "Very seldom." If he were to put fresh stock into the field the losses would probably be very heavy. The cape tulip is undoubtedly spreading and is to be found on Government properties and railway reserves. Then there is the yellow lupin. In parts of the State efforts are being made to grow the lupin, but in various centres I see indications of the yellow lupin growing among the better type of crops. I am afraid that when people gather the seed they take in some of the yellow lupin as well as the seeds of the other type. Why cannot we combat these pests at the present juncture? We might not eradicate them altogether, but we could certainly keep them in check. I do not know whether we

are getting prisoners of war here in any great numbers. We may be.

Mr. Watts: Or we may not be.

Mr. McLARTY: At any rate the war is not over yet, and it is certainly easier to feed prisoners here than it would be in Europe. If labour is available from that source, I suggest to the Minister that he might use every endeavour to secure their services in an effort to curtail the increase of these noxious weeds, many of which are spreading alarmingly. Farmers and landowners could receive assistance in combating the spread of the weeds by having labour made available to them. The member for Pingelly talked about the increase in the rabbit pest. To me it is remarkable that in a State where meat is rationed there should be a shortage of rabbits in the city. Several people have informed me that they could not buy a rabbit, yet there are thousands of them in the country districts. The member for Pingelly asked that supplies of strychnine should be made available. The judicious use of that poison represents one of the most effective ways by which the rabbit pest can be dealt with, and if the Minister can secure any additional supplies I trust he will do so. He certainly must appreciate how serious the rabbit pest has become.

Then again foxes are on the increase. At one time we looked for that pest only at night, but nowadays it is quite common to see the animals in the day-time. I would like the Minister to tell us what is being done at Wokalup. I notice that there is an increased vote for the various research stations—Avondale, Merredin, Chapman, Denmark, Wongan Hills, Salmon Gums, Wokalup and Gascoyne. I am concerned about what is happening at Wokalup. I thought the Minister for Health was more concerned about matters there than was the Minister for Agriculture.

The Minister for Agriculture: We are working in collaboration.

Mr. McLARTY: I understand some research work is being carried on there and certainly in that part of the State much research work is required. It is becoming more closely settled and unfortunately that brings in its train more diseases, the incidence of which requires to be investigated. In the dairying industry we are cursed with contagious abortion and mamitis with which

the producers are still unable to cope. Foot-rot in sheep is also apparent throughout the South-West. In view of all these circumstances I am very pleased that an increased vote has been provided for the research stations. I hope the work at the research station at Wokalup does not mean that the South-West is to be deprived of its agricultural college. We have advocated the provision of such an institution for years, and no part of the State is more deserving of encouragement than the South-West.

In his very informative speech the Minister for Agriculture spoke of the many primary industries that are being carried on, some of which, like flax-growing, are comparatively new avenues. It is necessary to have the latest information in connection with many of these undertakings, and I certainly hope the recent developments do not indicate that the Government does not intend to establish an agricultural college in the South-West. A very definite promise was made to South-West members that an agricultural college and experimental farm would be established in that part of the State, where both dry and wet farming could be carried on and research work undertaken. When the time is opportune for carrying out this work I hope it will be put in hand, and that it will not be considered that the research work being undertaken at Wokalup is sufficient.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—College of Agriculture, £6,436—agreed to.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.51 p.m.