

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 4th November, 1948.

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

QUESTIONS.

NORTH-WEST.

(a) *As to the Air Transport of Perishables.*

Mr. RODOREDA asked the Minister for the North-West:

(1) Is he aware that, owing to very high earlier-than-normal temperatures being experienced in the North-West, there is a great demand for fresh fruit and vegetables?

(2) Can he state when the subsidy on perishables sent by air to that area will be resumed?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) 1st December, 1948.

(b) *As to Hospital at Wittenoom Gorge.*

Mr. RODOREDA asked the Minister for the North-West:

In view of his own personal knowledge of the urgent need for a hospital at Wittenoom Gorge, can he state what progress, if any, has been made towards filling this need?

The MINISTER replied:

Following discussions, the company submitted draft plans on the 18th October, 1948.

The Commissioner of Public Health is now in the North and expects to visit Wittenoom Gorge.

A decision will be reached after his return.

ROADS.

As to Commonwealth Aid.

Mr. NALDER asked the Minister for Works:

(1) What were the amounts received by W.A. for purposes set out in Section 5 of the Commonwealth Aid Roads and Works Act, 1947 (rural roads, etc.)—

(a) for 1947-48;

(b) for 1948-49?

(2) What were the total amounts allocated to local authorities from these sums—

(a) for 1947-48;

(b) for 1948-49?

(3) What were the amounts tentatively set aside for the purchase of road-making plant—

(a) in respect of 1947-48;

(b) in respect of 1948-49?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) £192,000.

(b) For four months, July to October, £64,000.

(2) (a) £111,800.

(b) £111,000 (allocation in anticipation of full year's grant).

(3) (a) £60,000.

(b) £60,000.

ROAD TRANSPORT OF WHEAT.

(a) *As to Tonnage and Cost.*

Mr. PERKINS asked the Minister for Transport:

In view of the special carting of last season's wheat by road transport from the country to Fremantle —

- (1) What was the total tonnage carted?
- (2) What were the rates paid for such carting (per ton mile at various distances)?
- (3) What was the total cost of such wheat carting?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied:

- (1) 172,223 tons.
- (2) 30 miles, 5.01d.; 40 miles, 4.57d.; 50 miles, 4.50d.; 60 miles, 4.50d.; 70 miles and over, 4.25d.
- (3) £389,683 4s. 4d.

(b) *As to Proposals for Impending Season.*

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Is it contemplated that road transportation of wheat will be necessary for the haulage of this year's harvest?
- (2) If so, upon what grounds could the transportation of wheat by road be justified?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied:

(1) and (2) As the Commonwealth Government arranged a shipping programme for wheat last season beyond the capacity of the railways to deliver to ports, the Australian Wheat Board requested the introduction of road transport to augment rail deliveries.

A similar position may arise this year, but no advice has yet been received from the Commonwealth Government. In the event of road transport being re-introduced the Australian Wheat Board will meet all costs as it did last season.

RAILWAYS.

As to Cool Vans for Murchison Line.

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Railways:

Has the Commissioner of Railways yet fulfilled his undertaking to attach cool vans to the Murchison trains for the purpose of preserving perishables en route?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied:

Yes. Vans fitted with cool chambers were introduced on these trains last summer and will continue during the coming summer.

SOUTH-WEST REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

As to Selection of Committee.

Mr. MURRAY asked the Minister for Works:

As a panel of 12 names was submitted by the South-West Conference in July last, to enable the Government to select six as members of the South-West Regional Development Committee, will he advise the House—

(1) Has consideration been given to increasing the number to seven (7) to allow all Assembly electorates in the sphere of interest of this Committee to be represented?

(2) When will the final selection be made?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Consideration has been given to the basis referred to in the question. The committee is being constituted so that, as far as possible, the various districts and interests in the zone will be fully represented.

(2) Shortly.

AGRICULTURE.

As to Increased Cost of Harvester.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE asked the Attorney General:

(1) Is he aware that a 10ft. Big E harvester cost £280 last year, whereas the same machine is costing £450 this year?

(2) Is he able to offer an explanation for this heavy increase in cost to the farmer?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied:

(1) There are two types of Big E harvester until recently made by Robinson Pty. Ltd., now made and handled by the Baltic Simplex Machinery Company of Melbourne. The price last year of the standard model was £274. It is now £405 14s. f.o.b. Melbourne. The TH model, complete with choke cutter was £330; it is now £422 14s. The f.o.r. Fremantle price is the Melbourne price plus actual freight and charges without profit. West Australian agents receive their commission from the manufacturers.

(2) The matter is therefore beyond the control of West Australian authorities. The increase in price having occurred at the Melbourne end, and stated to be partly due to increases in costs of labour, materials and overheads, and partly because of improvements in design, which suggest that a new model is a substantial improvement on last year's. The manufacturers' price in Melbourne was fixed by the Commonwealth Prices Branch at Canberra on an Australia-wide basis, is now under the control of the Victorian Prices Commission, and therefore details of increased costs only be obtained from these sources.

FOODSTUFFS.

As to Restoring House-to-House Deliveries.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE asked the Premier:

(1) In connection with his answers regarding the house deliveries of meat, etc., as given to the member for Perth in the Legislative Assembly on 29th July, 1948, will he indicate to whom legislation providing for compulsory deliveries would be unacceptable?

(2) Will he reconsider the question of introducing suitable legislation?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) and (2) In view of the shortage of labour it is not considered that such legislation could be successfully implemented.

HOUSING.

As to Commonwealth-Rental Homes.

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) In respect of meeting deficiencies for Commonwealth-State rental homes for which less than the economic rent is being paid by tenants, what is the total weekly cost incurred by—

(a) the Commonwealth;

(b) the State?

(2) How many houses come within this category?

(3) What is the total number of houses being rented under this scheme?

(4) What is the total liability to date as affecting the Commonwealth and State, respectively?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Total weekly rebates at 31/10/48, £22 11s. Any annual loss incurred by a State in connection with the administration of housing projects generally under the Commonwealth-State Rental Housing Scheme is allocated on the basis of 3/5ths to the Commonwealth and 2/5ths to the State, but rental rebates are not dealt with as a separate item.

(2) Rebates are being allowed on rentals of 70 houses.

(3) Total rebates allowed to 31/10/48, £2,437 13s. 6d.

MOTOR VEHICLES.

As to Control of 12 h.p. and under.

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Has an order yet been issued to control the sale of motor vehicles of 12 h.p. and under?

(2) If not what is the reason for the delay, as legislation for this purpose was passed by Parliament three weeks ago?

(3) Is it the intention of the Government that such an order should be issued?

(4) If so, when?

(5) If not, why not?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied:

(1) No.

(2) Act not yet proclaimed.

(3) Yes.

(4) and (5) Answered by No. (2).

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Poultry Industry (Trust Fund).

2, Matrimonial Causes and Personal Status Code.

Transmitted to the Council.

BILL—NURSES REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 26th October.

HON. A. H. PANTON (Leederville) [4.43]: I understood that the Minister for Health was particularly anxious that further discussion on the second reading should be postponed until his return. I do

not know whether the Premier is aware of that.

The Premier: If the hon. member is prepared to proceed, we shall go on.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I am prepared to go on. The object of the Bill is to provide for a certificate for a new section of nurses to be known as mothercraft nurses, and it is proposed that they shall receive 15 months' training. The idea of having these nurses is that they may nurse mothers and young babies after returning home from maternity hospitals and it is not intended to use them as nursing staff in hospitals. There is said to be a dearth of nurses of this sort to look after mothers and babies after they leave the hospitals, so the idea is probably a good one and I have no objection to it. The suggested training period of 15 months will probably be all that is necessary for the purpose.

A proposal that I am not keen on is that a trainee shall be over 17 and under 35 years of age. Obviously, if a girl starts training at 17, she will be 18¼ years on completing her training. I suggest that such nurses will require to know a good deal about housekeeping; otherwise it will mean a payment of £4 or £5 a week for the nursing of a mother and baby and, in that event, very few people would be able to afford to employ such a nurse. So I say that if a mothercraft nurse is going to be of real value in the home, she will need to know something about housekeeping, and a girl of 18¼ years, unless she has been well trained in her own home, will not have learnt much housekeeping in the 15 months of her training.

I suggest that the age be raised to 21 and then we might get a better class of nurse for this purpose. I also believe that it would be a mistake to prescribe a maximum age of 35. I think 40 would be better. Quite a number of women, including widows of Servicemen, would be prepared to undergo training up to the age of 40 and would make excellent nurses for this class of work. I have discussed this matter with the Minister, and while he thought the age of 17 was not too low, he did approve of the maximum being raised to 40. I suggest that a range from 21 to 40 years for this class of nurse would be better than a range of 17 to 35 years. Admittedly I am looking at the question more from the housekeeping than

from the nursing point of view, because I do not think there will be a lot of nursing to be done, but there will be a good deal of work in the home.

I shall be interested to learn where these nurses will be trained. In answer to an interjection of mine, I think the Minister stated that they would be trained at the Alexandra Home for Women. I have not a very close acquaintance with that home beyond knowing that certain girls are taken in and are well cared for during their confinement. I cannot say how many trained nurses there are in the home to educate the mothercraft nurses or what system of training is likely to be adopted.

The Minister for Education: A new wing has been erected there for the purpose.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I know that a new wing has been erected at a cost of £7,000 or £8,000, and I learnt from my wife, who is interested in the work, that it is intended to employ another trained nurse.

The Minister for Education: That is so.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I am wondering how many trainees may be accepted at a time, because the matron certainly cannot be expected to undertake all the training.

The Minister for Education: The home is expected to employ a trainee sister.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: Can the Minister say how many nurses will be trained at a time or whether the training of a number will be of long duration owing to the home's being able to take only two or three at a time? I have been informed—I do not know whether the information is correct—that a premium is to be charged for the training of these nurses. If that is so, I direct the Minister's attention to the fact that the Nurses' Union is registered under the Industrial Arbitration Act and, though there is no award for mothercraft nurses because it is a brand new section of the nursing profession, I am sure that immediately the scheme is started there will be an application to the court to have them catered for, particularly while they are training, and I think the Act provides that no premium may be claimed from a trainee, whether the trainee be a nurse, a tradesman or anyone else. I issue that warning so that the matter might be looked into, because I do not want any trouble to occur over it.

I do not know whether there is a sufficient call for this class of nurse or how many there will be. It will depend upon the amount of training they have had and, to a very large extent, on the salaries they claim or that are awarded by the Arbitration Court. Knowing the salaries of nurses at the moment, I cannot see that the amount would be anything under £4 4s. to £5 5s. per week. The basic wage has been increased; but it is not likely that a man whose wife has just had a baby, and who has four or five other children, will be able to afford the amount I have mentioned. I shall watch with interest to see whether this proposal will solve some of the difficulties that are facing us.

The Bill also provides for something about which I am not very keen, though there may be ample justification for it. It proposes to admit trainees to tuberculosis hospitals at 18 years of age. At present girls are not allowed to enter these places before they reach the age of 21. I understand from the Minister that some of the Balts who have gone to Wooroloo are under 21. I do not think that is advisable, though I admit that there is likely to be less risk of infection in such an institution, because of the precautions taken and the hygienic methods used, than in ordinary homes.

Mr. Styants: They contract tuberculosis at Wooroloo.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: Yes; that is why I have doubts about sending girls under 18 to places like that. I believe the dangerous age for contracting this disease is between 18 and 25, and to send girls there at 18 is a mistake. I understand there is some difficulty in transferring trainee nurses. They can go into the Royal Perth Hospital at 18 but they cannot be transferred for further training to places like the sanatorium. I do not know whether it is proposed to let them begin training at 18 as tuberculosis nurses alone. There are nurses known as tuberculosis nurses, who are trained for two years in the treatment of that disease only. I do not know whether it is proposed to transfer trainees from other hospitals, where they begin training at 18 years of age, to Wooroloo and similar places; but I do not like the idea of sending girls there under the age of 21. I trust that whoever is taking notes of my remarks will get the Minister to find out whether the nurses referred to are to be

purely tuberculosis nurses or general nurses as well.

Take another factor with regard to mothercraft training! A mothercraft training system is in operation in Victoria; and I think there is one in New South Wales, though I am not sure about that. Victoria has a fine system that goes further than is proposed in this Bill. It is connected with infant health work in that State; and I have asked the Minister to find out while he is over there whether, after we have trained these nurses, there will be reciprocity between Victoria and Western Australia. A nurse who has done a general course here can either go to the King Edward Hospital and get what is called her "middy" certificate or go to Victoria or New South Wales and receive training there with that end in view.

There is reciprocity between the States with regard to the general nurse's certificate. At one time a girl who had trained in the Children's Hospital could go anywhere, but now she has to spend six months at the Perth or Fremantle hospital to obtain adult nursing training as well. A few years ago a nurse could go to England and get a job after having been trained as a general nurse here, but she now has to do three months' training in the Children's Hospital to gain experience in the nursing of children as well. Reciprocity is getting harder. I do not want to see nurses trained here if there is to be no reciprocity between the States. That is the case with regard to those who have been trained to nurse mental patients in places like Claremont and Heathcote. When I was Minister I endeavoured to overcome that; but the system of training in Victoria is different, and we did not get very far with the matter.

Mr. Styants: Might not that be an advantage, in that other States would not be able to entice our nurses away from Western Australia?

Hon. A. H. PANTON: There is that side of the question, but these girls say that they do not care to train because they will be hung up here and will secure no further experience. I think it does a nurse good to follow this occupation in other States and countries. In that way she gets a wider experience. As a result of the reciprocity with respect to general nursing,

we have a number of Eastern States' girls coming here for further practice. I understand that there are girls of 18 working in the Perth chest ward. However, it is a different thing altogether to have girls working machines there from having them do general nursing in a sanatorium.

I have no objection to the Bill as a whole but I think we should inquire whether it would not be advisable to raise the minimum age for training as mothercraft nurses from 17 to 21 and the maximum age from 25 to 40. I am sure members, and especially the member for Subiaco, will agree that a woman who has had a number of years' experience as a housekeeper and 15 months' training as a mothercraft nurse would be of more service in a home than would a girl of 17; and the raising of the age would make an opening for a number of older women who wish to serve in this way. Finally, I repent we should be careful about sending girls under 21 to be trained at Wooroloo or other institutions of that kind.

On motion by the Honorary Minister for Supply and Shipping, debate adjourned.

BILL—FRIENDLY SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 19th October.

MR. SMITH (Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [4.58]: Members should support this Bill. The first amendment deals with an increase in the price of rule books. Under the Act the maximum amount that friendly societies can charge is 1s., but the Act was passed in 1923 and printing costs have increased a great deal since then. In practice, friendly societies give away books to new members; but there are occasions when they make sales, and this measure will enable them to charge more than 1s. per copy.

The other amendment is consequential on one passed in 1946. The amending Bill of that year was badly reviewed. It came from another place and amended the Act so that friendly societies could assure members for £500 where previously the maximum was £300. In Section 36 of the Act there is laid down the amount that a member of a friendly society may claim. That amount is £300. It should have been altered in 1946,

seeing that friendly societies were allowed to assure members for sums of up to £500, so in effect this is a consequential amendment which is properly being made on this occasion. I support the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1948-49.

In Committee of Supply.

Debate resumed from the previous day on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and the Annual Estimates, Mr. Perkins in the Chair.

Vote—Legislative Council £3,454:

HON. E. NULSEN (Kanowna) [5.5]: I will not criticise the Government at present. Not that the Government does not merit criticism, but I will leave that until next year, giving it the opportunity this year to make good all its promises. I will deal first with the fishing industry, which is of great importance to Australia, but has not been developed to anything like the extent one would have expected. We have been importing fish from abroad in spite of the fact that we should be able to catch all the fish we require—either for canning or sale as fresh fish—in our own waters. There is urgent need for a larger and cheaper supply of fresh fish for the local market, as at present this commodity is too expensive for the average working man who has to pay 2s. 9d. or 3s. per lb. for it.

There is no doubt that our coastal waters contain an abundant supply of many kinds of fish, but the Australian people have not been fish-conscious and have not developed the industry. Instead, they have left its development to those who have come here from other countries. I hope that in the near future we will do more than we have ever done to exploit the wonderful resources that are available in the ocean around our shores. I am very pleased that the member for Mt. Marshall was able to persuade the House to appoint a Select Committee to inquire into the question of fish generally in this State. I have every hope that it will secure a great deal of

useful information that will give members a better appreciation and understanding of the problems faced with regard to obtaining plentiful supplies of fish, especially in Western Australia.

The Fisheries Division of the C.S.I.R. has been more keenly active in recent years in this State. Officers of that organisation have carried out aerial observations of the waters near Esperance and discovered there huge numbers of schools of edible fish, the existence of which was unknown to all but a very few people prior to those observations being made. Stanley Fowler, then senior field research officer of the Fisheries Division of the C.S.I.R., told me that in the Esperance area there were wonderful opportunities for big companies to establish a fishing industry. Following the observations of those officers a cannery has been established at Esperance and it is hoped that it will be in operation shortly after Christmas. There is a big market for fish from those waters as, besides the hinterland of Esperance, there is the whole of the Goldfields to be supplied.

Salmon fishing is now undertaken at Hopetoun, and from the 13th May to October, 1947, the Twelve Mile Fishing Syndicate took 120,000 salmon, while the Thirteen Mile party secured 18,000; a total of 138,000 fish. Those salmon varied from 5 lb. to 14 lb. in weight and, when headed and gutted, averaged about 320 to the ton. In that year, in a period of a little over five months, the two parties I have mentioned took 431 tons of fish. All that wealth has been lying untouched for many years and no-one gave it much thought or consideration until, in 1936 or 1937, a man named Young started in a small way and commenced bringing fish from that part of the coast to Perth. Since that time the industry has developed to the stage I have just mentioned. A cannery has been established at Hopetoun and I understand it has been successful up to date.

I am informed by the experts that the coastline round Esperance is suitable for trawling, as the bottom is sandy, unlike Albany and other ports where the sea floor is more rocky. I do not wish to speak disparagingly of the possibilities of those other ports, but am anxious to encourage the development of the industry in my own area. According to yesterday's issue of

"The West Australian" the Select Committee is going to visit Geraldton, Mandurah, Bunbury, Albany and Hopetoun, but there was no mention of Esperance.

Mr. Kelly: The possibilities of Esperance will not be overlooked.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I am glad to have that assurance from a member of the Select Committee, because I believe the possibilities of the industry in the Esperance area are indeed great.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Will members of the Select Committee have fish for breakfast in any of those places?

Hon. E. NULSEN: Unless the industry is developed in close proximity to a town it is often difficult for the residents to obtain fish. That is why I want the committee to visit Esperance. In the Recherche Archipelago there are over 300 islands and the surrounding seas are abundantly stocked with fish. I hope the committee will travel everywhere—

The Premier: Within the confines of Western Australia?

Hon. E. NULSEN: It might be advisable for it to go outside Western Australia and visit the fisheries in other parts of the Commonwealth to ascertain how they have been developed.

Mr. Styants: What is wrong with Norway, Sweden or British Columbia?

Hon. E. NULSEN: I hope the committee is able to obtain a full knowledge of the fishing industry in Australia generally. If we had had among us more people from Norway or Denmark, perhaps our fishing industry would have been more fully developed by now. I see no reason why we should not be able to secure from Western Australian waters all the fish required to meet local needs. I hope our wonderful resources will soon be developed and that Esperance, among the ports I have mentioned, will receive full consideration in this regard.

Recently the Honorary Minister for Agriculture in another place, Hon. G. B. Wood, accompanied by the member for Irwin-Moore, two members from the West province and the three South province members, visited Salmon Gums, where the field day was held on the 30th October. The Mallee district farmers have for long been faced with a difficult proposition but have now overcome their initial problems. Those that have remained in the area are now satisfied.

This year they have fairly good average crops, their stock is in good condition, they have had a good wool clip and the outlook generally is pleasing.

At last our Mallee farmers have reached a foundation from which they will be able to build and improve their position. I have no doubt that that district will be an asset to Western Australia. The first problem was that the classification was all wrong and the people did not have any experts to guide them. Secondly, the Mallee country is a type that has a lateral forest. That means that the top has been taken off the ground, leaving displacements of stumps and roots. However, the people down there are now getting the stumps and roots out of the ground and are producing crops. This year, the crops are truly remarkable and from a little over 5½ inches of rain quite a number of farmers will get six bags to the acre, and the average will be a lot higher than that for the State.

From there we went out on to the Esperance sandplain, and the first place the party visited was the aerodrome. The growth of pastures was prolific and the Minister was amazed. I am sure that when he saw it he considered that plain was equal to, if not better than, any other light land in Western Australia. His opinion was confirmed by the member for Irwin-Moore, who is a very successful farmer and knows light land.

Mr. Mann: Is the growth the same every year, or does it vary?

Hon. E. NULSEN: It does not vary very much; it is always prolific. The land, before being brought under cultivation, is very uninviting and unattractive and requires a lot of super. From the aerodrome, we went to the property of Mr. Bow, who has 1,000 acres under cultivation. It is not picked land and, since 1939, he has put only 45 tons of super. into it. He is now carrying at the rate of one sheep to the acre. Had that land been given large dressings of super., it would probably have carried at the rate of two sheep to the acre.

Mr. Mann: Do you mean two sheep to the acre all the year round?

Hon. E. NULSEN: Yes, all the year round.

Mr. Smith: And nobody wants it.

Hon. E. NULSEN: No, nobody wants it; but they will want it. It is merely because it is so far from the capital city and looks

so uninviting until brought under cultivation. When it is brought under cultivation, it produces the goods and will continue to do so. Water presents no problem down there because there is plenty of fresh water on the surface, and the people that have done the work as they should, have been very successful. However, there are very few men down there because there is a prejudice against that part of the State. That area should not be called a sandplain, and when I made my first speech in this House I suggested it should be called the Esperance Downs, or some name like that, to distinguish it from the Mallee country.

We also went to the property of Buller White, and we found his pastures very creditable. I remember when I was in that country in 1928. I took a very keen interest in the plain, and at that time a man named Helms was managing a company called the Pine Forest Company. He was then growing clovers, Wimmera ryegrass, kikuyu grass, lucerne and various other types of grasses. Their growth was most prolific, and I witnessed that he had seven sheep to the acre on that property for three months. If the place had been fenced into four paddocks, it would have meant a rate of two sheep to the acre all the year round. That proves conclusively my faith in this country.

As far as the Esperance plain is concerned, I want to give Mr. de Burgh—I think he is the Editor of "The West Australian"—sincere thanks because he has never let up on the possibilities of this area. Whenever it has been possible to include reference to it in any article he has written, he has always done so. He is not going to get anything out of it, but he has convictions that the possibilities are there and that they are far greater than anybody in Western Australia imagines.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: He wrote something in this morning's paper.

Hon. E. NULSEN: Yes, that is a very fine article, and it will be appreciated by the Esperance people. I intend to quote from a speech I made in this House on the 30th August, 1932, when I referred to the Esperance sandplain. I said—

The Esperance sandplain is truly prolific. This has been proved conclusively on all the holdings on the sandplain that have been worked to advantage. The pine forest holding proved beyond doubt that lupins, Tangier peas

and clovers will grow in abundance. Mr. Helms, the former manager of the pine forest, has implicit faith in the sandplain. The people of Esperance and of the mallee were very disappointed indeed that the Government did not give the company a small advance to help them to carry on their experimental work for the benefit of the State.

I went to Sir James Mitchell and tried to get an advance from him for the company to assist it in the experimental stages, but at that time the State was in the throes of the depression and it was not possible to obtain any money. I am perfectly satisfied that had the advance been made and the company had been able to carry on, it would have proved conclusively the possibilities of this country.

Mr. Mann: The year 1936 was not so bad.

Hon. E. NULSEN: That was in 1932, when I first came into the House.

The Premier: As soon as I can manage it, I will go there with you and see the country for myself.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I am very pleased to hear the Premier say that and I hope that when he comes he will stay for two or three days, so that I can show him around not only Esperance but also around the Dalyup River and other places where fruit, etc., can be grown.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: The Premier promised a couple of months ago that he would come to Geraldton.

Hon. E. NULSEN: The Premier has promised on several occasions to come to my district, but unfortunately his duties have prevented him from doing so; otherwise, he would have been down there before. However, I am pleased that he intends to come down later when the House is not sitting, because he can then put in more time. My remarks continue—

The country is not hard or expensive to clear; it is a matter of establishing experimental farms to determine the best methods, and the pine forest was of great advantage to the district. All the holdings on the sandplain that are being worked are proving very satisfactory. Mr. Spedding Smith's farm on the sandplain is doing wonderfully well. Two sons are working it and they can grow practically anything—clovers, lupins, Tangier peas, potatoes, onions and tomatoes.

I saw some of the best tomatoes I have ever seen in Western Australia grown on that sandplain. They were even better

than those that can be grown in the district of the member for Geraldton.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: No, that is not quite right.

Hon. E. NULSEN: My speech continued—

Mr. Fleming, Mr. Bow and others are also doing really good work on the sandplain. I do not know why that land has been called sandplain. The term seems to imply land that will not grow anything, but the Esperance sandplain is really prolific and gives returns beyond the conception of people who have not seen for themselves what it can grow. The unfortunate part is that Esperance is so distant from the capital. People do not visit the district and do not know what it can produce. In the early days there was a traditional prejudice against the place. Some people seemed to think it would have been better for Western Australia if Esperance had not existed.

When that plain is developed, the people will think that it is a wonderful asset and will be very glad that Esperance does exist. To continue—

If it were possible for members to visit the district, they would be able to appreciate the real value of the sandplain, which must prove a valuable asset to the State. I am satisfied that had the Esperance sandplain been located in the more highly-developed parts of the wheat belt or grazing areas, it would now have been producing much real wealth for the country. I understand that the Southern Mallee Agricultural Society officials have sent invitations to Ministers and members to attend the show to be held on the 29th October. I hope that many members will make the trip. If they do, we shall be pleased to show them around the mallee country. The time will be limited and we shall not be able to show them as much as we would like, but we shall be able to show them the sandplain and enable them to realise its capabilities.

As far as Esperance is concerned, it has its railways, roads and harbour, which is equal to anything in Australia. The jetty is out in 37 ft. 6 in. of water, and a few feet further on this deepens to 40 ft. and beyond that to 60 ft. The harbour is well protected by islands, and experts have informed me that it is a very fine harbour indeed. The facilities are adequate, we have our goods sheds and the Government would have in capital expenditure in that district approximately £1,000,000. So it can be seen that when the sandplain is developed and if we can get an experimental farm down there, the area will be instrumental in bringing prosperity to that district.

No-one seems to realise the possibilities, because the district is so far away, and consequently we have not been able to encourage people who are agriculturally-minded to go into the area. I do not want to say anything more about the sandplain, but shall be pleased when the Premier tells me he can go down on such and such a date. I assure him I will make all arrangements a fortnight ahead so that he will have an opportunity to contact all the local people, including those in the Mallee and Norseman and the other areas of the district. I shall be very glad when I can make the announcement that the Premier will be visiting the district.

Next I desire to say a few words about the goldmining industry. I am greatly concerned about the rising costs on the 'fields. If something is not done to alleviate the position I am convinced that the life of the Goldfields will be cut down probably 50 per cent. compared with what would be expected under normal conditions. The situation today is certainly precarious. Companies have spent thousands of pounds in zoning the mineral areas, which are divided off into 4-dwt., 5-dwt., 6-dwt. sections and so forth. Unless steps are taken to assist the industry, all those low-grade ores will be left behind because it will be necessary to treat the higher grade ore, which means that the less valuable stone will never be treated. That would mean a very extensive shortening of the life of many mines. It would be necessary to pick out the payable ore bodies in order to meet the cost of production.

At present gold is worth £10 15s. 3d. here but the average cost of producing an ounce of gold is over £12. That indicates the detrimental effect of the existing position on the industry. Victoria has produced much more gold than Western Australia but today it is dealing with only a small quantity. Victoria was in quite a different position from this State in its goldmining development because its various producing areas were surrounded by country where other primary and secondary industries could be developed. That was mainly because of the satisfactory rainfall. Unfortunately, rainfall in our goldfield districts is altogether too light for such a purpose, which means that we have to take full advantage of the ore deposits and treat the whole of the ore that can be dealt with at

a reasonable cost. The area where 4-dwt. or 5-dwt. ore is located would represent double that of the higher grade sections of the Goldfields. I remind members that today gold is most essential on account of the dollar exchange position.

I am told that owing to the Bretton Woods agreement, the Commonwealth Government cannot increase the amount paid for gold. If it is not possible to increase the price of gold, then some way of subsidising the industry should be resorted to. If other countries can adopt that method, surely we in Australia can get over the difficulty by adopting some similar system. We might allow our gold to be sold on the open market. The price at Singapore and Hongkong ranges today from £25 to £30 an ounce. If that is so, and our low grade ore zones could be worked with gold sold at that price, it would be very helpful to the general development of Western Australia. I do not know what effect it would have on the currency of the British Commonwealth of Nations if we were allowed to dispose of our gold on the open market. If the Commonwealth is to buy all our gold, some consideration should be given to the price factor.

Unfortunately, Western Australia is but a small portion of the Commonwealth and the other States are not as gold-minded as we are. Consequently the goldmining situation does not affect them to the same extent. I believe, however, that our Goldfields representative in the Commonwealth Parliament, Mr. Johnson, M.H.R., is doing everything humanly possible to help the goldmining industry. I believe, too, that the Prime Minister, Mr. Chifley, is very honest in his desire to assist, but he is confronted with the difficulties arising under the Bretton Woods agreement. However, I urge that if they cannot overcome the existing difficulties, they should at least give Western Australia a fair deal. This is the only State that is affected to any great extent by the condition of the goldmining industry; and if it were to close down, the Government would lose heavily because of its capital expenditure in that part of the State while, in addition, it would mean that business people would go out of commercial life and workers on the 'fields would lose their homes.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Cannot the State Government help a bit?

Hon. E. NULSEN: I was coming to that. If every avenue has been exploited without avail, the State Government might take steps to render assistance because the loss of the goldmining industry would affect revenue very considerably by means of indirect, if not direct, taxation.

The Premier: In what way do you suggest the State Government could offer effective help?

Hon. E. NULSEN: It could make concessions.

The Premier: Where, and on what?

Hon. E. NULSEN: In connection with water and freights.

The Premier: I hope to do something about water.

Hon. E. NULSEN: The freight problem is a big one. The Government could probably help in other ways. I have not gone into the details. I know the Premier would be very loath to see the Goldfields close down.

The Premier: I would be.

Hon. E. NULSEN: If something is not done, there will certainly be a great shrinkage in the population there.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The Government could do something to keep prices down.

Hon. E. NULSEN: It might help to a small degree in that direction.

The Premier: The Acting Leader of the Opposition is very pessimistic about the price structure.

Hon. E. NULSEN: There is no need to impress upon the Government the necessity of assisting the goldmining industry, because I am convinced it is au fait with the position and has at its back the wonderful Mines Department. The Under Secretary for Mines is one of the most competent men in Australia, and no doubt he has apprised the Government of the danger. There is indeed very great danger. Even if the industry is able to hang on, under present conditions the eyes will be picked out of the mines, which means that they will have only about half their normal life. Some people say that the mining companies are still making profits. Of course they are. They could treat the whole of their higher grade ores: the member for Swan will understand what that would mean. The companies might leave their lower grade ore bodies alone and

deal with only 9 dwt. or 10 dwt. ore. The position is indeed serious, and I trust that the Government, if it cannot secure the co-operation of the Commonwealth, will do something to assist the industry and save it from extinction.

I promised the House that on every possible occasion I would pursue the matter of a flat rate charge for water and I certainly feel that some consideration should be given to that question. It is very hard on the country people that they should be asked to pay 10s. per thousand gallons for the water they consume whereas the residents of the metropolitan area have to pay only 1s. per thousand. The people in the outlying centres are entitled to such amenities as we are able to enjoy in the city. Unless they can have water supplies at a reasonable price, they cannot enjoy anything like similar conditions. Obviously, they cannot be provided in every respect with amenities similar to those available to the people residing in the metropolitan area. If anything is done, however, I trust it will not be by some system of writing-down but by the adoption of an equalisation scheme that will not cost the Government anything, seeing that it could increase prices in the metropolitan area and decrease them in the rural districts.

I do not think it would be too much for city people to pay 9d. or 1s. extra and reduce the price to the country people by 8s. or more. That would put the people more on an equal basis. It is all a matter of calculation. A somewhat similar system is in operation in connection with the postal service and the sale of sewing machines and patent medicines. All these lines are sold at the one price throughout the whole of Australia. Then again there is the petrol question. Supplies can be obtained in Perth for 2s. 8d. a gallon but the man at Salmon Gums has to pay 3s. 8d. People in the outer areas are living under hard, adverse conditions but are producing the real wealth on which we subsist, and they require petrol to facilitate their operations. City people use petrol mostly for pleasure because they have the railways, trams and other means of transport at their disposal. People out-back do not use petrol unnecessarily but in the metropolitan area, if one were to go to a picture show or to a football match, one would see hundreds of cars lined up, indicating the unnecessary use of petrol in this

part of the State. The Premier might be able to induce the companies concerned to work out a scheme whereby increased prices could be charged in the city, where most of the petrol is sold, and reduced prices charged to people in the rural districts.

The Premier: Could Esperance be made a distributing centre?

Hon. E. NULSEN: Yes, if we could induce the companies to establish themselves there. It is not a matter of Esperance alone, for the same thing applies at Laver-ton, Leonora and other remote centres. Life there is not very congenial and petrol used in such places is only for essential purposes. Then again there should be a flat rate charged throughout the State for oil supplies. No-one has given consideration to that matter. At present flat rates for petrol and oil apply in the metropolitan area, extending from the hills to Fremantle. That indicates that some consideration must have been given to the matter as it affects city people, because the extra cost involved in cartage to the outer areas has to be covered.

Then again, if we fail to do our utmost to improve the position of people in the country areas, more of them will gravitate to the city where more than half the population of the State resides under present-day conditions. That is not conducive to good government or to the best development of the State. I feel that all these matters require serious consideration, and I hope the Government is not going to be traditional and orthodox but will be venturesome. I trust it will afford help to the people in the rural districts in some new way, which will place them on a basis more equivalent to that of the city dwellers. If we contemplate the situation, we must realise that Western Australia is built on a foundation of centralisation. In this part of the State, within 75 miles of Perth the people are represented by 35 members of Parliament in this House of 50 members.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The Government is going to provide some more.

Hon. E. NULSEN: Now they are to have an increase, so the poor country, instead of having 15 members, will have only 13 or 14.

Hon. A. H. Panton: But look at their quality!

Hon. E. NULSEN: I am not discriminating as regards quality, as I feel all mem-

bers of Parliament do the best they can for their constituents. Country members, too, must look after the interests of their constituents. In regard to the redistribution of seats, I think the commission has done an excellent job. I congratulate its members on their recommendations; they acted in accordance with the edict of Parliament and were quite impartial. We would all sooner retain our present electorates. My own electorate has been reduced considerably in size, but I would prefer to retain it as it is now. However, if I am returned, my work will be much easier and I shall not be put to so great an expense. Our notice paper appears to be getting very thin. I do not know whether the Treasurer intends to conclude the present session very soon; but if he should make an effort to do so, I would be prepared to sit for two or three extra nights, in which time we should be able to pass the Estimates. We should thus be able to conclude the business of the session before the end of the month.

The Premier: I am all with you there. We will go to Esperance if you can do that.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I should be only too pleased to sit for four or five nights in succession, but I doubt whether my colleagues would care to do so. I shall reserve my further remarks until we reach the various departmental Votes.

MR. BRADY (Guildford-Midland) [5.48]: I feel I should say a few words on the Estimates, as there are one or two matters with which I thought the Treasurer might have dealt at length but on which he did not touch seriously at all. Dealing with first things first, I am concerned at the scant reference made by the Treasurer to the matter of housing. The member for South Fremantle interjected during the Treasurer's speech and the Treasurer promised to give him further information later in the debate. So far, that information has not been given. My concern is the very poor consideration that the Guildford-Midland district has received from the State Housing Commission. I hope the Treasurer can see his way clear to urge upon the Commission the necessity of expediting the building of houses there. The Treasurer

took solace from the fact that an average of approximately 3,000 houses per year had been built in recent years, and that, by stepping up a little, the number could be increased by another 1,000 during the current year.

When I consider the housing position in my electorate and compare it with that of other metropolitan districts, I feel I should suggest to the Treasurer and to the Minister for Housing that they request the State Housing Commission to consider withholding the granting of permits to industrial establishments and commercial concerns, which are building enormous warehouses and offices. I feel that these could be left in abeyance until the housing position is met. At present, there are in course of construction 2,000 homes. I understand that the commission has a waiting list of some 8,000 or 9,000, so a number of years must elapse before the housing position is caught up with. The Treasurer mentioned the other night that ample supplies of building materials were available, but that there was a shortage of labour. That is why I suggest the Minister for Housing could well say to the Housing Commission, "You should not grant permits for industrial and commercial buildings until such time as the housing difficulty has been overcome."

In view of the very serious position of our railways, I thought the Treasurer would deal with them at length. Our most important State trading concern is rapidly falling back in every respect, including finance and its service to the community. But the Treasurer had very little to say on the railways. I have been searching through the Revenue and Expenditure Estimates to find out to whom the interest, amounting to £1,000,000 per annum, is paid on the original capital expenditure on the railways. More information should be given in the Estimates in this respect. I thought that the Treasurer would indicate why the railways are deteriorating and that he would take the people into his confidence by explaining how it was intended that the railways should again assume the responsible position which they ought to hold. I notice provision in the Estimates for the sum of £6,000 for the Railway Institute. A similar amount was provided in the Estimates for 1947-48. The Treasurer had very little

to say with respect to the Royal Commissioner's recommendation as to educational facilities for railway employees. The commission thought there was considerable room for improvement in these facilities, but I believe there is ample room for better educational facilities in all the departments of the railways.

The Government should consider the question of providing more money to enable railway employees to become educated in railway affairs. Under our present system, apprentices are allowed one full day each fortnight to obtain technical instruction in their trades. The time is long overdue when the adult members of the service should be allowed time off in which to consider ways and means of improving the railway system and bettering the service. There is general depreciation of railway assets in the metropolitan area. Buildings, including railway stations and overhead bridges, are in a sad state of disrepair owing to lack of maintenance. The railway fence from Perth to Midland Junction is in a shocking state, particularly at Guildford. Probably the Treasurer will recollect that during the by-election some criticism was levelled against the Government for allowing the fence to be pulled down.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: By the Liberal Party.

Mr. BRADY: That was done to enable the party's organisers to have campaign accommodation on railway property. Strange as it may seem, although the Liberal Party pulled down the railway fence, it is still down, and it is an eyesore in the district. I hope that before Their Majesties the King and Queen, and Her Royal Highness Princess Margaret, pay a visit to the Guildford-Midland area next year, the Minister for Railways will improve the fence along the railway property so as to make it presentable.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: It should be done at the expense of the Liberal Party.

The Premier: Did it not pay rent?

Mr. BRADY: The Liberal Party should pay because it appears that it has very little regard for its responsibilities to the community when it pulls down a fence and does not re-erect it. I feel that I should draw the attention of the Premier to the serious housing problem in the Guildford-Midland area. According to the figures

given by the Minister for Housing the other night, 328 people are waiting for houses in that district, and only 19 homes are being built to catch up the leeway. I hope that the Minister for Housing will give consideration to holding up some permits for industrial establishments so as to allow the labour forces to be concentrated on the building of residences for the people. I also hope that, when the Treasurer is replying to the discussion on the Estimates, he will enlighten members as to what the Government intends to do about the serious drift in the railway position, and also tell us whether there is any chance of having some of the capital indebtedness overseas liquidated, the interest rates reduced, or something of that nature, because it seems that with the railways having to find over £1,000,000 annually in interest they will never be a paying proposition.

HON. J. T. TONKIN (North-East Fremantle) [5.53]: I wish to refer to a couple of matters on the general debate, and will reserve for discussion on the various departmental votes important items that I have in mind, because I think it will be more appropriate to do so then. I was interested the other day to read in a publication called the "Liberal News," which would not be unknown to the Premier, that the Liberals consider they have done remarkably well as a result of the redistribution. They said it appeared there would be 11 new seats under the redistribution and that of those the Liberals would most assuredly win eight, that two would probably go to the Country and Democratic League and one, possibly, would be won by Labour, but this was by no means certain—this was the Melville seat, and the Liberals had hopes of winning it.

The Premier: Who will be the candidate for your side, I wonder?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I wonder! The Liberals are patting themselves on the back that in this reshuffle they have come out well on top. They consider they have eight certainties out of 11, which is pretty good going, and the possibility of one more.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The Liberal Party does not complain.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: What the Country and Democratic League was thinking about I do not know.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The trouble is, it was not thinking.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If the prognostications of the Liberal Party are borne out, it will mean that the Country and Democratic League will probably be submerged for ever. It is well to mention this. I have the document here if the Premier wishes to read it later, but I can assure him that what I have said is correct. So, it is not anticipated by the Liberals that Labour will get any of the new seats created by the redistribution. That suggests there must have been some definite design about the basic scheme which was put up and agreed to by this Parliament. However, time will tell whether that forecast is anywhere near the mark.

The Minister for Works: What are your personal views?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I will give the Minister my personal views when we are on the hustings. There is one other matter I desire to refer to, and that is the financial aspect of the Budget. From time to time, the Premier has repeated that the taxation rights should be returned to the State. When I have interjected on several occasions, he has replied that he wants these rights returned, but that he also wants the fields of taxation properly defined. That would not help the Premier, either, because it cannot be expected that the Commonwealth will retire completely from the field of taxation because of the large commitments already existing. Social services, for example, have developed so much under Labour Governments in the Commonwealth Parliament that the people generally would never agree to giving up what they now have. So there will always be a substantial expenditure under that heading.

Whether there be a change of Government or not, there will not be very much reduction in the social benefits which already exist, because, much as the Liberals might rail against the extra load imposed on the Budget, they would not be game to attempt to cut benefits down seriously, because they would know that would have a big effect on the voting in the Commonwealth and would jeopardise their continuance as a Government. They would not run the risk. Whilst they most certainly would not have given the social benefits which are now obtaining, they would hesitate, if they were elected in the future, before they curtailed them. So we

have to accept that the Commonwealth revenues will be largely expended upon the provision of various social services throughout the community. I have not been able to obtain exactly comparable figures to prove the argument I desire to advance, but I have done the best I can, and I propose to use the figures in my possession.

I have ascertained that for the year 1947-48 the revenue which the State obtained from the Commonwealth by way of special grants was £3,450,432. In addition, Western Australia received from taxation reimbursements £4,984,191, or a total from the Commonwealth of £8,434,623. I would like to know—perhaps the Premier will tell me later—just how much money was collected by the Commonwealth by way of income tax in Western Australia for the year 1947-48. It appears to me that if the figures for the previous year are any guide, the Commonwealth actually did not collect much more in direct taxation from Western Australia than was returned by it to this State.

The Minister for Education: I gave you the estimated figures. We were £900,000 short last year.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is pretty close up.

The Minister for Education: It is a lot of money for Western Australia.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is £900,000 in £9,000,000.

The Minister for Education: That is only at pre-war rates.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Then the figure must be wrong, because I am going to take the existing rate.

The Minister for Education: The pre-war rates do not compare with those of the present day.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The statistician's figures show that in Western Australia for the year 1946-47 the Commonwealth collected—not on pre-war rates but the 1946-47 rates—only £9,376,045. That does not square with the statement of the Minister for Education that they would collect only £9,000,000 for 1947-48 on pre-war rates. It would be impossible, because pre-war rates were so much lower than the existing rates. I am bound to use the only figure I could obtain, and that is the figure I have just quoted for 1946-47—£9,376,045. Taxation has been reduced since 1946-47 and there is a disparity

of £900,000 between the two figures I have given, the State revenue for 1947-48 and the Commonwealth income tax collections from this State for 1946-47.

If we take the figures for 1947-48 on a reduced taxation basis, even allowing for substantial increases in certain incomes, it would appear that for 1947-48 the Commonwealth could not have collected very much more—if any—than it actually returned to the State. If that be so, it would show that were taxation rights returned to the State there could not possibly be any reduction in taxation for State taxpayers if the State was still to have the amount of revenue required.

The Minister for Education: You are counting in the Grants Commission grants, which before the war were separate from the taxation.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I am counting the actual sum of money that the State is now receiving from the Commonwealth, as against the money it could raise if it were still levying its own taxation.

The Minister for Education: You have to go back before the war when we raised our own taxation, so the figures are hardly analogous.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I think they are and I believe we would be entitled to expect that there would be some continuing grants, but I cannot imagine that we could demand from the Commonwealth the return of our taxation rights and then say to that Government, "We are sorry, but we cannot raise enough money for ourselves, so we expect you to give us some more."

The Minister for Education: You should include the taxation paid on Western Australian profits by Eastern States companies.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I think that under existing circumstances, with the present trend, we must be getting money from the Eastern States taxpayers, because they are paying considerably more than they did when this State had the right to levy its own taxation. If the Government is so keen about getting back its taxation rights, it is remarkable that it does not make more noise about that question. There is a statement, now and again, that if Western Australia had its taxation rights back the position would improve, but that is where it ends. If the Premier were genuine about

the matter he would be going all out to bring about this greatly improved state of affairs that he so desires.

The Premier: Do you consider the present set-up to be satisfactory?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Not by any means, because the State, unless its development is to be considerably hampered, must get more money from somewhere, and it is in the interests of the Commonwealth—the parent body—to see that the States get the requisite funds to enable them to implement their proper development. To illustrate that I need mention only two departments. The first is the Education Department. Much as the Minister would wish to introduce certain reforms, there is a limit to what he can do because the Treasurer is unable to meet all his demands. Yet there are many things that have to be done for education or that, in the interests of the Commonwealth generally, ought to be done.

If we look at the matter from the point of view of defence we must realise that in the future our strongest arm of defence will undoubtedly be the Air Force. For that purpose we may require large numbers of pilots, and pilots, during the recent war, were recruited from the high schools throughout the Commonwealth. If we have not a high standard of education which will enable large numbers of youths to reach high school standard, we will not have available the numbers from which to draw personnel to man our aircraft. From the point of view of defence alone it is of paramount importance for the Commonwealth to see that adequate funds are available to enable the educational system to function properly, in order that a high standard may be reached by all of our young men who are capable of reaching it. If State revenue is to be definitely limited, and the Education Department can have its share and no more from the money available to the Treasurer, that department is bound to suffer, and so we must look to the Commonwealth for increased revenue for that purpose. That is why I say the present set-up is not satisfactory. It does not enable the State to have available the funds necessary for its proper development.

Turning now to agriculture, there are many ways in which we could profitably expend money in research, to the ultimate benefit of the State, but we have not the funds available. With our deficit mounting

we are becoming more and more dependent upon the Grants Commission and, not knowing what that body will do, we find ourselves in a very difficult situation. The Premier must be worried. He is obliged from time to time to refuse requests from Ministers for additional funds, when he knows that the expenditure would be perfectly justified but cannot possibly agree to it because he has not the money on hand.

I admit, without hesitation, that the present set-up is not satisfactory, but I am afraid a return to the States of their own taxation rights would not be the solution, because it would mean that we would never be in a position to get help from the more populous States that derive considerable advantage from our existence. They, being older than this State, and having had the advantage of earlier development, are much more able to meet the costs of current development than are we in this State, with our large area and small population. It is not unfair on our part to look to those States to carry some of our burdens, but they will do that only through the Commonwealth Government. If the taxation rights were returned to this State we would get precious little help from the other States, and so I suggest to the Premier that he might drop that call for the return of State taxation rights and bend his energies towards securing a better arrangement under the existing set-up.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

MR. ACKLAND (Irwin-Moore) [7.30]: I wish to take this opportunity of speaking on two matters but unfortunately for me I find that the Press of this morning and this evening have made some reference to both of them.

Mr. Marshall: You must have given the information to them.

Mr. ACKLAND: The first is in connection with soldier settlement. From the information which I have been able to gather it appears that some 268 soldiers have been granted farms or the farms are in the course of allocation, and that approximately 450 further farms are being prepared for allotment. When these figures are compared with what has taken place in the other States they must be considered very satisfactory. It is expected that during the life of this Parliament at least 700 soldiers will be settled on

the land. Though that may be quite a good performance, it is not much satisfaction to the remaining 1,250 potential farmers who will have to wait for a longer period before becoming producers in this State. At the present rate of progress it looks as if it will be at least half way through the 1950's before those men will be accommodated.

Mr. Hoar: They will be too old then.

Mr. Rodoreda: Now you have the Minister worried.

Mr. ACKLAND: I intend to ask the Minister in charge of land settlement to increase his activities, more particularly as regards virgin country. I know that under the present scheme he is hedged in with many conditions. Under the Federal-State set-up as it exists, a farm must have certain improvements and be of a certain productive capacity before it is declared suitable. That is all right up to a point, but I believe the young returned soldiers of World War II are just as willing to take risks and show initiative as were the old returned soldiers who took over properties in the 1920's.

In the 1,250 waiting applicants we have a very large potential labour force and I think it would be to their interests if with reasonable financial aid they prepared their own virgin country. They would appreciate those properties far more if they knew that they had taken such an active part in their preparation.

Mr. May: Can they not do that under the State scheme?

Mr. ACKLAND: I ask the Minister to give further consideration to the settlement of some of these lads through the Rural Bank, and at a later stage—when the properties have shown some development—I think it ought to be possible for them to be included in and receive assistance under the Commonwealth scheme. There are many limiting factors in soldier settlement today, and I believe it is the first occasion in the history of Australia that a settlement has been embarked upon during a wave of prosperity. That makes the position much more difficult because during a time of prosperity materials are short.

The Minister for Lands: That is one of the vital factors.

Mr. ACKLAND: There are so many people waiting to buy materials and it stands

to reason that the merchants are far more ready to sell to private individuals than they are to the Government because they are in a position to make more profit by so doing. The Government must get a rebate or be able to purchase materials at a percentage below what the average man, or the private individual, is called upon to pay.

The Minister for Lands: We do get a discount.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You do not even get the materials.

Mr. ACKLAND: Thus the firms are more willing to sell to private individuals than they are to the Government. I am not very much in favour of buying an improved farm. Taking such a farm away from a man with a lifelong experience and handing it over to someone else does not increase production. If we could direct more attention to virgin lands we would do far more good for the State.

Mr. Marshall: What about land adjacent to the railways which is not fully utilised?

Mr. ACKLAND: There is a great deal of land adjacent to the railways which is still unproductive and has very little in the way of improvements on it. It would appear that the Minister is interested in some land south of Gnowangerup and towards the Stirling Ranges. I understand there are some 35,000 or 40,000 acres in this area and this will make room for 20 farmers. At Ongerup there is a bigger area of unimproved country where it is anticipated that 50 men could be established on properties. Nearer Perth we have other land. I have not had an opportunity to see the report on some areas not far distant from Clackline, but it contains some good country that I believe could be utilised as pasture farms for grazing purposes. I am of opinion that it could be partly cleared so as to make it carry very good pastures, and that this partial clearing could be done reasonably cheaply.

Mr. Marshall: If the Government proclaimed the Closer Settlement Act, could not that land be brought into utilisation?

Mr. ACKLAND: Perhaps so, but if a man is using his land to reasonable capacity, he should be permitted to carry on, even though the property is a large one. We have an instance in Tootra Station. I admit that it was a station of very large area and, although it was expected to settle 25 men

there, I am doubtful whether the 25 farmers would produce more wealth than was being produced before. Certainly it has this advantage that it will support more people. That, however, is an extreme case, and I think we can accomplish far more good by making productive land that in the past has not produced at all.

At the week end I had the privilege of going to the Salmon Gums and Esperance areas. For a long time I have been interested in that country and have on previous occasions spoken about the light land at Esperance. I was extremely interested in what is happening in the Salmon Gums district. I expect most members read the leading article of "The West Australian" of this morning. Recently I have been delving into files dealing with the settlement of the mallee and have some extracts from a leading article published on the 22nd August, 1935, that must be of interest to members. That article painted a very dismal picture indeed. The extracts read—

The Esperance wheat settlement has been a costly and wasteful failure. It is unique amongst Western Australian wheat settlements in the magnitude of its dismal failure. Isolation, eternal disappointments and mallee suckers between them have led to an extremely high rate of abandonment. The mallee settlement once held 500 settlers to whom £718,000 of Agricultural Bank money had been advanced. To serve the settlement, 125 miles of railway was constructed costing £584,000; a new jetty costing £64,000 was also built and now only 125 dispirited settlers remain.

Soon after that the Agricultural Bank wrote off £500,000 of settlers' debts. The holdings were increased to double the size and the bank advanced a further £80,000 to make those farms capable of carrying stock. When that was done, it was considered that the area would carry 150 settlers. That, no doubt, was a true picture in 1935. It appears that the 150 farms cost £10,000 each, and in one respect the position is worse today inasmuch that the 150 has dwindled to 80, and the extra expenditure that has been incurred since that time has raised the cost of establishing those farmers to an average of £25,000 each.

But the picture is better in another direction. In the 80 farmers who remain, we have as fine a body of men as will be found anywhere in this country. I believe it is the hardest part of the State in which to grow wheat, even though the settlers have learnt a lot in the intervening years, but

those men are happy and satisfied and are making good, and I believe that from now on there will be some slight increase in the production of that area.

When I read the reports and went through the files dealing with that area, I was strongly of opinion that, because of the few settlers there and because they were growing only 10,000 acres of wheat between them, the State farm at Salmon Gums should be removed to an area that needed to be tested, but I am now of opinion that it would be a very hard and foolish man who could come into this Chamber and recommend anything of that nature after seeing the type of people there, the need they have for experiments and assistance, the knowledge that they have reached their lowest ebb and from now on there must be increased production, and that they must go ahead more particularly with stock and the growing of fodder crops for the stock.

It would appear that we have spent at least £1,500,000 in that area, but we have to the south of it the Esperance plains, which, at first sight, present a very dismal appearance. I do not think there is much less-productive looking land anywhere within a good rainfall in this State; yet, on the few properties that are being worked, it is astonishing what is being done. We had occasion to visit the aerodrome, which had suffered from soil erosion after the scrub had been cleared. In 1946 some subterranean clover and rye grass were sown in an attempt to prevent the wind from blowing the surface into little waves. Since then, without any further top-dressing, the feed has grown to such an extent as to cause considerable worry and inconvenience. Great difficulty is being experienced to keep the growth down and have the surface suitable for the planes to land on.

There is another property of a little over 1,000 acres which has been top-dressed once in 10 years, and that at less than one cwt. per acre. This property was carrying more than the equivalent of one sheep to the acre. I commend this land to the Minister because, in spite of the bad cultural methods adopted—one might almost say ill-treatment of the land—its productive capacity is extremely high. I would like to see a great number of people settled in this area. There should be, I believe, because of the high rainfall, a limit to the land which they may take up. I suggest

that holdings should be limited to not more than 1,500 acres.

Mr. Hoar: Which part of the State is that?

Mr. ACKLAND: Out from Esperance. The Light Lands Commission in its report states that there is an area of approximately 2,500,000 acres of land in that district. Certainly some of it may not be as productive as that which was inspected. Even if we subtract the poor country we still have land available to settle hundreds of men in an area with an excellent rainfall. They may, at first sight, appear to be living in isolation, but in fact their conditions will be ideal. I hope the Minister will do something in this regard, especially as the men can be settled at such little cost. I am of the opinion that pastures can be established there. What clearing is necessary can be done almost with the first ploughing and those pastures can be established for £2, or very little more, per acre. Buildings and fences will cost more.

Water is available almost at ground level, in no place more than 10 or 12 ft. below the surface. When we compare that with the huge expenditure which we are undertaking in other parts of the State, I maintain that this district gives better prospects for the settlement of men at less cost than elsewhere in the State. I do not want for one minute to belittle the work which is being done in other parts. The settlement of the areas out from Mt. Barker and Denmark should be proceeded with. I am not competent to estimate how much it will cost to clear the land, but I think the Government will be very lucky indeed if it clears and puts that country under pasture at a cost under £12 an acre.

Mr. Hoar: That is, roughly.

Mr. ACKLAND: That is my opinion, and I may be wrong. The hon. member may be in a better position to arrive at the cost. However, that only favours my argument that the establishment of men in districts where the cost is so small must appeal to the Government. Immigration must go with land settlement. I am aware that it is a Commonwealth matter, but we need people for all kinds of jobs in the country, we need the materials to settle the people there, and we need the plant. In my elec-

torate, during the last 12 months, the people have formed themselves into a regional development committee, which has not received any official recognition. The various road boards—I think there are seven—have linked themselves up with the committee and have taken it under their wing. Recently the committee circulated a questionnaire to all the settlers in that district, but only a few of them have been returned so far.

The objects of the committee are to increase production and to make life in the country and the townships more acceptable to the people. So far, 74 questionnaires have been returned. These disclose that the people need materials and labour in vast quantities. If the Committee will bear with me for a few moments, I will state what these settlers require. Of the 74 settlers who have returned their questionnaires, only two did not desire further to improve their properties or were prepared to sell and get out; 24 desire to clear a little more than 8,000 acres of land; 36 want 167 miles of fencing; 15 require fences to be renewed; 34 require 54 wells; 14 desire to construct 20 dams; 20 are absolutely opposed to a comprehensive water scheme, while the majority are not interested in such a scheme; 31 need farm buildings; 24 require homesteads; 55 need machinery sheds; 32 want workmen's cottages; 29 want stockyards and shearing sheds, and 23 need carpenters on their property for a total period of 300 weeks' work.

I shall not weary the Committee by stating the number of farm hands which these settlers require, as the figures are incomplete. The interesting part, however, is that only six of the settlers want monetary assistance and they can arrange their own finance quite easily. What is happening in this district, is, according to inquiries, also happening throughout the State. We cannot go ahead too quickly with our immigration schemes. The State is anxious to make headway and do more developmental work in order to produce greater wealth. I ask the Minister in charge of immigration to bear these facts in mind when he is discussing this matter with the Federal authorities. There are several other matters on which I should like to speak, but I will have the opportunity to do so when we reach the departmental Estimates.

MR. GRAHAM (East Perth) [7.58]: It is my intention to make a few observations on the Budget before proceeding to devote some attention to the Government and a few other matters. To me, the Budget reveals one outstanding fact, that is, a greatly increased expenditure; because pre-war, that is, in the year 1938-39, the expenditure was £11,170,000, whereas the estimate for the current financial year is the colossal figure of £20,492,000, or an increase of £9,500,000. That represents an increase of 83 per cent. and that, Mr. Chairman, during a period when prices, wages and the cost of living have increased by approximately 40 per cent. Therefore, I think it can fairly be said that the Government has an opportunity of spending far more freely and in far more directions than past Governments, even taking into account the depreciation of the purchasing power of the pound.

It might be pointed out that the expenditure of this Government has increased by £5,500,000, or approximately 35 per cent., in the two years that it has been occupying the Treasury bench. If we cast our minds back 12 months, the figures reveal that the expenditure for the year just closed was estimated at the time we were discussing the last Budget to be £16,400,000; but in actual fact the total assumed the proportions of £18,000,000 in all. In other words, the Treasurer was £1,600,000 out in his calculations as to what would be the likely commitments of the State for the financial year just concluded. Of course, he was fortunate in the fact that the much-maligned, tight-fisted Mr. Chifley was sufficiently generous to extend to him and to the State an additional grant of £1,000,000. Accordingly, the deficit was kept within reasonable proportions. For the current year, it is estimated that the deficit will reach £352,000. This, if the finances of the State are kept within that limit, will be the highest deficit since the financial year 1936-37.

It has been suggested by the member for Leederville that the recent increase in the basic wage will probably have some effect on that figure; in other words, the deficit will be even greater on account of that fact. But I suggest that any Treasurer worthy of the name would be aware that we are passing through a period of increasing prices, with increasing wages as a natural corollary, and that therefore his estimates must be based

on that consideration. If not, there is something very much at fault with the accountancy of this State. I mentioned that the deficit for the last financial year was kept within reasonable proportions because of the generosity of the Commonwealth Government. There was no obligation on Mr. Chifley to provide that extra £1,000,000. Had it not been for that grant, our deficit would have exceeded £1,000,000.

That has a familiar ring about it, because during the years 1930 to 1933, the last occasion on which there was an anti-Labour Government, the deficits for that period averaged £1,250,000, the only time in the history of Western Australia that deficits in excess of £1,000,000, have been achieved—if I might use the word in that connection. There would have been a repetition of that deplorable state of affairs had it not been for the action of the Commonwealth Government in making that additional £1,000,000 available to the State Government. In making those comments, I would mention that, hand in hand with this all-time record expenditure, another record has been accomplished. Loan moneys have been spent to a greater extent than ever before in the history of Western Australia. At some other stage we can give consideration to what has been done with all that money.

The Premier: I wish I could spend more of it!

Mr. GRAHAM: In the financial year 1938-39, Western Australia collected under the headings of income tax, financial emergency tax, hospital tax and dividends tax a total of £2,200,000. It is estimated that for the current financial year £4,500,000—in other words, more than twice the amount of ten years ago—will be received from the Commonwealth Government under those headings. In addition to that, for the last complete pre-war year only £570,000 was collected by the State under the heading of grants from the Commonwealth for disabilities which this State suffers. But it is estimated that for the present year £3,600,000 will be received under that heading. I mention these facts because it is oft repeated that this State is not receiving fair and equitable treatment from the Commonwealth Government in respect of financial grants. I venture to suggest that had we retained our right to impose taxation on incomes, our returns would have been far less

than at present, and, in order to meet the expanding costs, the Treasurer at this juncture would probably have before the House a Bill to increase the rates of taxation to be levied on the people.

I now want to mention a matter which should cause all of us to reflect seriously upon a situation which is going from bad to worse. During the past year, it has cost Western Australia, on account of interest commitments, £3,225,000. Sinking fund has absorbed £820,000, making a total of £1,045,000, to which must be added another £500,000 on account of exchange. That is to say, our annual commitment in respect of the present indebtedness of Western Australia is £4,500,000. That is equivalent to the total amount the Commonwealth Government makes available to Western Australia in respect of taxation reimbursements; so we have reached the stage when the total amount received from the Commonwealth Government satisfies only our commitments under the heading of Western Australia's national debt.

As the tendency over many years has been for the indebtedness of the State to increase year by year—at present, 25 per cent. of the income of the State is devoted to that end—if the experience of the past means anything and we continue along the same path, a yet greater proportion of the State's income will have to be devoted to meeting our indebtedness. If Mr. Speaker were in the Chamber he would recollect that more than 15 years ago he and I on a number of occasions appeared on a common platform advocating banking and financial reform, and pointing out the state of affairs to which we were gradually retrogressing. Very many of the things we stated then are borne out by the experience of the moment. But I repeat that every single penny we receive from the Commonwealth, because of the income tax collections on our behalf, is required, not to discharge our indebtedness, but to meet the annual commitments in respect of the debt of Western Australia. We are still carrying on, but nevertheless this indicates that we are heading for somewhere.

All I am going to say further regarding the matter is to tell the more conservative-minded people, who are so ready to condemn proposals and create scares in the minds of the public to seriously reflect upon the matter, and that some definite and drastic alterations in our banking and financial

system are necessary by legislative enactment, otherwise we shall be confronted with a state of affairs which may be beyond the power of Parliaments to stem. With the weight of indebtedness reaching, before long, the proportions I envisage, something will be rent asunder. There has been criticism of the fact that in an address given over a network of radio stations last Sunday evening, the Prime Minister indicated that approximately £80,000,000 annually is at present being expended upon social services in the Commonwealth, and that he hoped before long that figure would reach a total of £100,000,000, having in mind, of course, some additional benefits that it is the intention of the present Commonwealth Government to extend to the people.

I realise that this, by comparison with pre-war years at any rate, is a staggering figure. Many people question the ability of Australia to shoulder the burden. But after all, to a large extent, it means that previous responsibilities were being carried by people without relationship to their capacity to bear them. Under the present social service scheme there are not, to a large extent, new commitments, especially in respect to those benefits, because the responsibilities for them are merely being transferred from the poorer people to those better able to bear them. In other words, the working man who becomes afflicted with some illness or accident, instead of having to pay, for perhaps half his working life, hospital accounts, doctors' bills and make up the leeway for the period he was without employment and income, will be relieved of these liabilities and persons better able to bear the burden will meet them. No new liability is created; the more fortunately placed sections of the community will pay for those who are unable to provide these facilities for themselves. That, of course, is something to be commended.

My experience, particularly during the depression years, was that many persons went without medical treatment, which was essential to them, simply because they could not afford it. At the present moment—and this should be at all times—Australia cannot afford to have any of its people unwell to the extent that they are unable to follow their usual employment. This gets beyond the monetary factor altogether. It is necessary for the economic well-being of the Commonwealth that everybody should

be at work and healthy. If no provision is made for widows' pensions, child endowment, and other social service payments, then when times of tribulation come upon us such things as sickness, and hospital and medical benefits generally, will be denied many people, so that apart from their suffering hardship, there is loss of employment, effort and production to Australia as a whole. While there are inequalities in the incomes of the people of the Commonwealth, the greatest possible consideration should be given to the less fortunate sections of the community. That is in the best interests of Australia.

As I indicated earlier, approximately £80,000,000 a year is being spent under the heading of social services, out of a budget of £509,000,000. In other words, about 16 per cent. of the Commonwealth Government's revenue is returned to the public. But I emphasise it is merely a transfer of income under that particular heading. When we come to the State of Western Australia, we find, according to the financial return No. 35 submitted to us, that the cost of social services totals £4,144,000. Pensions under the 1871 Act amount to £158,000; superannuation payments last year reached a figure of more than £253,000, and there was additional expenditure of £4,500 by the Superannuation Board. There are various other headings such as compassionate allowances, £3,600; judges' pensions £2,000; mine workers' relief £11,100; Police Benefit Fund £5,600; benevolent grants to institutions £10,300; coal miners' pensions, £3,000; railway and tramway passes to disabled persons, and so on, transport and freight concession totalling many thousands of pounds and, under one heading, subsidisation of rail transport of superphosphate, £35,058.

These total something in excess of £4,600,000 for the financial year just concluded. Strangely enough, that total represents 23 per cent. of the revenue of the Government of this State and therefore we spend a greater proportion of our money on social services, bonuses and pensions generally than does the Commonwealth Government. I suggest that no member would seriously submit that any of the items I have hurriedly run through should be reduced or eliminated altogether, particularly bearing in mind that some of them cover

education, the University, the care of mentally afflicted, and so on.

I wish now to deal shortly with a number of matters that are not directly related to the Estimates that we are considering. I desire in the first place once again to voice my protest at the scant consideration that the Parliament of Western Australia is receiving at the hands of the media of publicity. It will be recalled that during my remarks on the Address-in-reply debate I suggested that the Government should approach the Australian Broadcasting Commission with a view to a period being devoted, three nights per week, to giving a summary of the activities of Parliament and highlights of the speeches made by members.

Mr. Brady: We would not want "The West Australian" then.

Mr. GRAHAM: I will deal with "The West Australian" in a moment. I think some notice was taken of my remarks, but nothing concrete came of the suggestion. I believe that the A.B.C.—apart altogether from Parliamentary affairs—has fallen down on its job. Since before last Christmas, owing to the shortage of newsprint the public Press—which is the chief organ of publicity and news—has been reduced considerably in size, and had the A.B.C. been fully aware of its responsibilities I suggest that that was the opportunity it must have hoped and prayed for, because the people are seeking and require a full and comprehensive news service such as they are not at present receiving.

The Minister for Lands: The A.B.C. must consider the public.

Mr. GRAHAM: Exactly, and if the Minister for Lands had some consideration for the people, particularly those in the outback, he would know of what great value it is to them to be able to receive their news immediately over the air instead of several days later per medium of daily newspapers or, in many cases, their weekly journals. Even people in the metropolitan area, owing to the limited coverage given by the daily metropolitan Press, have an appetite for news that is not being catered for at the moment. Following the Australian news at 7 p.m. there is only five minutes of Western Australian news given and it has to cover everything

from flower shows or sporting events to public affairs, statements made by the Government, and so on. Following the 9 o'clock news, the position is little better and last night a total of three minutes was devoted to the headline news. From memory every single item of it had reference to matters outside of Western Australia.

Surely the affairs of the State Parliament are worthy of some greater recognition than they are receiving at present, apart from all the other matters of general and public concern. I learned yesterday that the Government of New South Wales is considering making an application for a broadcasting license in order to establish a Parliamentary station to broadcast the proceedings of that Parliament. To me that indicates that the Press in New South Wales does not give anything like fair coverage of the news and that the broadcasting stations, as in Western Australia, are falling down on the job, so that the tremendous expenditure involved in establishing and equipping a broadcasting station is considered to be justified.

Mr. Yates: Are you dissatisfied with the coverage of Parliamentary news in the local Press?

Mr. GRAHAM: Definitely.

Hon. A. H. Panton: The member for Manning is the only one who has had much publicity up to date.

Mr. GRAHAM: I repeat that owing to the shortage of newsprint there have been some difficulties, but I know that only too often that excuse can be used as a pretext for excluding certain matters. I am making these remarks entirely without personal feeling. I have my own methods of approaching those who live in the electorate of East Perth and whether I am given great or little space, either in the Press or over the air, is of secondary importance. The all-important point is that the Parliament of Western Australia should receive proper consideration. I know that certain members have spent hours and even weeks in preparation and research, following which they have delivered speeches in this Parliament, but not one word of those addresses has appeared in the Press or has been heard over the air.

The Minister for Lands: We could set up a bookstall somewhere in Perth and sell "Hansard."

Mr. GRAHAM: The Minister for Lands, notwithstanding the fact that he occupies a seat on the Treasury bench, is apparently incapable—this has been my experience of him for more than five years—of bringing a serious mind to bear on any question whatsoever. There is a reluctance on the part of members to indulge in full research and to apply themselves to matters that are before the House, because neither their own electorates nor the public at large hear anything about it and it is so much waste of breath for them to speak in this Chamber.

Mr. Kelly: All members do not chase publicity.

Mr. GRAHAM: It is not a question of members chasing publicity, it is a question of the public, under a democratic system, being entitled to know what members are thinking and saying. If they found out what the Minister for Lands said and how he behaved as a Minister I do not think he would be the member for Toodyay for very long.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Hear, hear!

The Minister for Lands: Wishful thinking.

Mr. GRAHAM: If the Minister for Lands requires it placed on record perhaps I could give, and should give, a detailed description of the manner in which, for instance, he introduces Bills into this Chamber. However, I want to deal with something of far more importance than the Minister for Lands. I repeat, in all seriousness—

The Minister for Lands: We thought you were serious.

Mr. GRAHAM: It has been evident from the nature of the addresses in this House, because comments have been made to me by persons associated with this institution and others who occupy places in the various galleries of this Chamber, that there seems to be a wilful falling off in the application of members to their addresses on various questions. Members ask themselves, "What is the use of it all?" There is no attempt to make political capital or anything else out of this matter but from my own observations I feel that there is, unfortunately, a great deal of truth in that assertion.

There are many tastes to be catered for over the air and the same applies to the Press, but I feel confident that there are many extraneous matters in both those media of publicity that could be excluded and some consideration given to the all-important institution of Parliament. I sincerely hope and trust that the Government, not with any desire to assist members on one side of the House or the other, or any individual members, will do something to see that Parliament receives a recognition far greater than it does at present.

I want to say how pleased I am that at long last the Australian flag flies from Parliament House. Only this year, for the first time in the history of this Parliament House, has the Australian national flag flown at a mast of its own. I remember two years ago when I made certain observations and deplored the fact that there was no place found for the Australian flag on this building, the member for Beverley, who followed me, stated that it was the most disloyal utterance he had ever heard in his life. Of course there was no suggestion on my part that the Union Jack should be hauled down from the mast.

The Minister for Lands: The member for Beverley knew that you would be mentioning this fact tonight so he has gone home.

Mr. GRAHAM: I do not believe for one moment that that is a fact. I was prompted in that move by a most esteemed gentleman who is no longer with us; I refer to the late Mr. J. J. Simons, one of the greatest Australians who ever lived in this country. I know many people have had differences regarding his political outlook, but so far as a good, solid, loyal Australian citizen is concerned, that man would take second place to nobody. I am disappointed, however, that the Australian flag, and the Western Australian one as well, occupy places on this building which are scarcely noticeable. From the city side of this building it is almost impossible for them to be seen. I do not know whether the thoughts that apparently were held by certain members of this Chamber when the suggestion was made by me, are also held by officers of the Public Works Department, but it would almost appear that they are ashamed of the Australian national flag, and the Western Australian emblem, because the masts are so short. I feel that they should occupy a far more

prominent place than they do and it appears to be a very half-hearted effort indeed.

Today we were privileged to pay tribute to Sir James Mitchell upon his elevation to the position of Governor of Western Australia. He is a local man who, because of his association with public affairs, and his own estimable personality, knows the outlook of the people generally and to use a common term has the common touch. During the long period that he has served as Lieutenant-Governor of Western Australia his position has never previously been more highly respected and no person has endeared himself to the people of Western Australia more than has Sir James. I was pleased that the Premier and others who are anti-Labourites today paid tributes to a local Australian who has been appointed to a vice-regal position. I concur in the lofty sentiments and tributes that they expressed.

I might mention too, although it may be out of place, that Sir James Mitchell, a member known, was for many years the member for Northam and led the Nationalist Government to the polls in 1933. That Government was ignominiously defeated and Sir James lost his own seat. Notwithstanding that fact he was appointed to the position of Lieut-Governor of Western Australia and has been a credit to that position. When we turn our eyes further afield to a more important position, namely that of Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia where another Australian was promoted to a position of dignity and trust as a representative of His Majesty, we find that those who have been so smooth-tongued with regard to the local appointment could not think of sufficiently laudable terms in order to villify Mr. McKell and the Commonwealth Government because of that appointment.

The Premier: Whom do you term as "those"?

Hon. A. H. Panton: The Minister for Lands principally.

The Minister for Lands: I knew you would not leave me out of it.

Mr. GRAHAM: Those who have the same political outlook as that of the Premier.

The Premier: Have you ever heard me say anything to the detriment of Mr. McKell? No, you have not.

Mr. GRAHAM: No, I have not.

The Premier: When the Governor-General came to this State I treated him with all the courtesy due to his high position.

Mr. GRAHAM: That is so. But I am aware of the outburst that was engineered and inspired from one end of the Commonwealth to the other in protest against the appointment of an Australian to the position of Governor-General.

The Premier: You would be much wiser to let that matter drop.

Mr. GRAHAM: That man was not a defeated politician. He held his own seat and was the leader of a Government that had not been overwhelmingly defeated. He was the Premier of the chief State of the Commonwealth and therefore was a man of training and experience for the position.

The Premier: A most unworthy utterance!

Mr. GRAHAM: Thus he occupied a high and dignified position in the Commonwealth. He knew Australia and the Australian people, and was eminently qualified for the position. Therefore it ill-became critics in Western Australia to be so bitter in their condemnation of the appointment of Mr. McKell, because those same critics had—and rightly so—been most laudatory in their remarks concerning Sir James Mitchell.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: A most unfortunate comparison!

Mr. GRAHAM: There we have a typical example of party political bias.

The Minister for Lands: That is not true.

Mr. GRAHAM: Had Mr. McKell been a Liberal, probably all would have been well.

Mr. Styants: Did not Mr. Menzies say that, if he were returned to office, he would get rid of him?

Mr. GRAHAM: Mr. Menzies says all sorts of irresponsible things. Had an ex-Labour politician been appointed Governor of Western Australia, I shudder to think what the public reaction would have been, but I am proud that Sir James Mitchell has proved himself in every respect eminently fitted for the post and has indeed been an adornment to the position he occupies.

Now I wish to speak about transport matters, and my first comments deal with

motor vehicle licenses. It was grossly unfair that the Government should have increased the license fees from the 1st July of last year, in view of the very small allocation of petrol to users of motor vehicles. I wish to give several examples. From December, 1946—this was prior to the 25 per cent. increase in license fees—motor-cars used for private purposes were allotted petrol as follows:—

	8 hp.	12 h.p.	30 h.p.
Monthly gallonage	8	12	17

I have figures for the various categories of motor vehicles, but I quote these three as being fair average types of vehicles used. At present motor users are receiving the following quantities:—

	8 hp.	12 h.p.	30 h.p.
Monthly gallonage	4½	6½	9½

When the larger quantities of petrol were being made available to the public, the license fee was 25 per cent. less than it is at present. Since the Government decided upon the increased levy, the quantity of petrol made available to users has been reduced on three occasions, and still the Government persists in compelling people to pay the full amount based on conditions when people could travel thousands of miles a month, if they so wished; in other words, when there was no limit whatever. At present we are receiving only just over one-half of the quantity we were getting when license fees were 25 per cent. lower than they are now.

The irony of it is that, notwithstanding this taking of money from the people—I should say to a very great extent under false pretences—the Government, in answer to questions I asked early in the session, said that consideration would be given to introducing legislation to effect some reduction in license fees, not now, but as from the 1st July next, if there was no improvement meanwhile in the supply of petrol. I say that there are thousands of pounds owing to motorists at present, so why defer the matter until July of next year? This is a wrongfully-imposed levy upon the motoring public.

Mr. Brady: Next year we shall be getting near to the elections.

Mr. GRAHAM: I do not know whether that has any bearing on the matter, but it is a gross injustice that something has not been done to meet the situation. The

license fees at present are based on the pre-war rates.

The Premier: But we still have to meet the upkeep on our roads.

Mr. GRAHAM: Yes, but it is unfair that people tied down to the receipt of about half a dozen gallons of petrol a month should have to pay license fees exactly the same as they were paying when there was no restriction whatever. If additional revenue is required for the maintenance of roads, it should be recovered from the public generally and not by means of such a terrific levy upon one section of the community only. For the year 1947-48, motor vehicle license fees in this State represented £1 7s. 1d. per head of population. To indicate what this means, let me explain that land tax paid in this State represented only 4s. 4d. per head of the population. The charge levied upon users of motor vehicles generally was the highest single levy imposed under any heading whatever. Yet the Government, coldly and calmly, says that consideration will be given to effecting some relief, perhaps from the 1st July next. With regard to traffic, I notice, Mr. Chairman, that there seems to be an over-emphasis upon one factor only, and that is speed. This is regarded as the greatest menace to human life and safety. I appreciate that it is an important factor; but to my mind negligence is a greater factor militating against the safety and lives of the public. Some motorists are dangerous driving at any speed.

A competent motorist, driving a vehicle in perfect mechanical order, is able to travel at considerable speeds with the vehicle under control. While there should be some check on excessive speeding, the Police Traffic Branch should give much greater attention to the negligent driver. For instance, members who drive cars, or even those who travel as passengers, will have noticed that correct hand signals are given only by the minutest fraction of motorists. Incorrect signals are given, they are given too late, vehicles veer to the centre of the road and cross it before taking a left-hand turn. When a hand is extended, it might mean anything from pointing out scenery, waving to an acquaintance, or flicking the ash off a cigarette, to bringing the vehicle to a halt, steadying down or making a right-hand turn or anything else.

Motorists who do not give signals to traffic behind them constitute a real menace to other motorists, and a following vehicle may have to indulge in mechanical gymnastics to avoid an accident. There are a number of streets leading into highways which have painted on them in yellow letters the word "Stop." A traffic regulation requires that all vehicles must stop before entering highways. I personally have religiously obeyed the regulation, because I might happen to be unfortunate enough to have a traffic inspector immediately behind me. From my observation, I find I am practically the only person who obeys the regulation.

Members: No.

Mr. GRAHAM: I have had motorists scowl at me from time to time because I have halted, and those behind me have had to act similarly. All I had been doing, however, was to obey the traffic regulation.

Mr. May: What made you obey it?

Mr. GRAHAM: Because I feared I might be found out. Members are aware that when members of Parliament transgress the law, they are thrown into the limelight, so we have to be extremely careful.

Mr. Styants: We get all the publicity we require in that direction.

Mr. GRAHAM: There is another matter I regard even more seriously than those I have mentioned, and I would ask the Government to give consideration to it. An accident recently occurred on one of the highways late at night. I am unaware of the circumstances, but am confident that it occurred because of a situation which I am about to outline. At night, when public transport has ceased, it is unfortunately the practice of many people who have missed the last tram or bus to walk home anywhere but on the footpaths. When the street lights are out, this practice is still more dangerous. These people walk on the highways for the deliberate purpose of obstructing traffic in the hope of securing a ride home. They constitute a real danger not only to themselves but to the drivers of vehicles. Other motorists have complained to me that this is a very frequent happening indeed. Most members can prove what I say by driving along any main arterial road after public transport has ceased to run. They will not find isolated persons, but perhaps a dozen. I

sincerely hope that steps will be taken to have this practice discontinued.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Cyclists, too.

Mr. GRAHAM: Yes; I have encountered cyclists, too, and have mentioned this menace on two previous occasions. I venture the opinion that not more than 25 per cent. of the push cycles in the metropolitan area are properly equipped with headlamps and tail lights.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: I think you are right.

Mr. GRAHAM: It is an exception for them to be equipped with tail lights or satisfactory reflectors. Of course, all this is distracting and distressing to a motorist. Suddenly there looms in front of him a push cyclist whose course, as a rule, is not particularly steady. I agree with the member for Beverley that it serves practically no purpose to bring matters under the notice of the Government on this debate or on the debate on the Address-in-reply, because it would appear that absolutely no notice is taken of them.

The Premier: That is not so.

Mr. GRAHAM: Well, so far as concerns giving practical effect to them. I hope that my remarks on traffic matters will be given consideration. I desire to say a few words regarding prices. Early this week the basic wage was increased by 4s. 2d. That, however, was merely a reflection of the increase in prices, and therefore no-one should deplore the increase. In common with some other members, I feel it is only a start.

Mr. Styants: Just a little on account.

Mr. GRAHAM: That is true. When the people, misguided and wrongly advised, voted No on the 29th May of this year, unwittingly they asked for the state of affairs now descending upon them. I was amused, when reading of the conference of Ministers now being attended by our Attorney General, to see that the chairman rather naively expressed surprise that controls on some thousands of items having been released, in not one single case had there been a reduction in the price to the public. Everybody knows perfectly well that people manufacture and trade goods only for the purpose of making money; and the greater amount they can make, the more successful they are in business. The

greater opportunity they have for the making of that money the happier they are. So they asked the people to vote No at the Federal referendum, and they were pleased beyond all bounds when the State Ministers decided to relinquish control of so many items. It is a picnic for them at present, especially as the public have more money at their command than ever before.

Every person willing and able to work can find employment; and so everything in the garden is lovely for the profiteers and the rest of them. Only in the last few days I witnessed a receipt in respect of an item that has had mention in this Chamber, namely, fish. Nine and a half pounds of snapper were ordered by a certain person; and the price, believe it or not, was 3s. 8d. per lb. That was on Friday last. Unfortunately for him, he had ordered the fish and that was the bill that came to him after he had received it. That shows something of the trend of prices at present. It gives some idea to the public whom we advised early in the year to vote Yes in regard to price control. They are now reaping the harvest consequent upon their voting otherwise. I venture the suggestion that without any campaigning whatsoever on the part of the Labour Party, we will return to the Treasury bench at the election in 18 months' time, not necessarily as a consequence of the calibre of our candidates or the strength of our claims—

The Premier: I heard some prophecies about Mr. Dewey.

Mr. GRAHAM: —but because the people themselves will react to what is happening at present. I think the Premier's interjection was most ill-advised, because it was President Truman who imposed controls and who objected when they were lifted by the very people the Premier represents. President Truman called a special session of Congress in order to reimpose them but was unsuccessful; and it was because of President Truman's desire to save and serve the people that they returned him to office. It was for that reason beyond any other. So when it comes to the State election in 18 months' time, it will be to the advantage of the Labour Party that victory will have been made so easy for it. But unfortunately, in the process, it means a very real tragedy for the people of this State.

I venture to suggest, in companionship with the member for Pilbara, in connection with the recent increase in the basic wage being a reflection of increased prices, that in comparison with what is going to be the position over the next 12 months or so, if I may become vulgar for the moment, we ain't seen nuthin yet. The other day I was speaking to a highly respected officer who has something to do with the allocation of motor vehicles. Incidentally, let me say how surprised I am that the Government has not yet taken steps to control the allocation of vehicles of 12 horse power and under. I want to give one example to show what the release of control over motorcars has done, and the easing of price controls as well. This story can be checked with that officer. It was not told me in confidence, and I hope that my conversation with him is not being wrongfully used in this Chamber.

An applicant for a motorear, who was deserving of one, was granted a vehicle which cost £850. He used that car for several months and then the Liberal-Country Party Government did the right thing and removed controls. He sold the car to a dealer, after he had used it for several months, for £1,050. It was still comparatively new. The dealer, inside of 24 hours, had sold it for £1,100. Such is the demand for higher-powered motor vehicles of particular makes. There was nothing wrong in accordance with the law in any of those transactions. The man was entitled to a vehicle, which he got for £850. That was the correct price. Having used it for some months, and the prices of second-hand cars not being controlled, he sold it for £1,050 to a person who was unable to get a new vehicle. Within 24 hours the motor dealer had sold it for £50 more; and £50 in 24 hours is not bad money in anybody's language.

In the course of a few days, because this Government has not controlled the lower-powered cars, this man apparently being friendly with all and sundry, was able to purchase for himself a brand new low-powered vehicle. So we have a whole succession of events which morally at any rate are absolutely rotten and are the direct outcome of action on the one hand and inaction on the other of the present Liberal-Country Party Government. I know the Chamber must be a little weary of having

constantly had the slogan of cobwebs thrown about this Chamber; but I remember that final devastating advertisement, with the Premier in the centre and surrounded by half a dozen big spiders sitting on cobwebs covering various forms of public activity.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Like King Bruce.

Mr. GRAHAM: They referred to four things, one of them being housing, and purported to indicate what the Liberal-Country Party Government would do if it were given a chance. But questions asked of the Minister for Housing early in the session showed that in respect of all classes of homes—war service homes, rental houses, McNess houses—and permits to build, the number of outstanding applications was constantly increasing and was greater today than ever before. So much for the progress made in that direction. The position is deteriorating. I am not going to blame the Government for that state of affairs: all I do at this juncture is to criticise it mildly for the pleas and promises it made in March of last year. But everyone knows that because of the real difficulties which confronted the Wise Government, the McLarty Government is unable to do any better. The position is going from bad to worse.

The Premier: There has never been so much building going on in the history of the country.

Mr. GRAHAM: That may be so, but I am concerned with those persons who are going short of houses. The number is constantly increasing, and all the words and excuses in the world cannot gainsay the fact, because the figures were provided, as the Premier knows, by his own Minister for Housing. More than a month ago I asked certain questions of the Minister for Housing regarding the relative costs of building houses by contract and day labour, to see which was the cheaper and more efficient method. It is remarkable to realise that even up to the present time the Minister has not provided me with an answer. In other words, notwithstanding that the Government took action to dismiss certain of its employees engaged upon the construction of homes, the Housing Commission does not know which is the best and cheapest method of building houses. Apart from matters of policy generally, surely

before disturbing the whole mechanism of house construction, steps should be taken to ascertain whether one particular method was satisfactory or not. But apparently no endeavour was made to do so prior to that action being taken. I say now that the Minister does not know which is the cheaper method of erecting houses for the people, day labour or contract.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: He knows, but he will not say.

Mr. GRAHAM: I know that the Minister does not.

The Minister for Housing: I have a pretty good idea.

Mr. GRAHAM: We all have, but I and the public of Western Australia want to know which is the cheaper method. I think I asked the question in a fair form by, including, in day labour, reasonable costs of administration, No. 2 cobweb related to hospitals. I say nothing regarding that other than that I hear many heartrending appeals over the national broadcasting stations and others for assistance for various hospitals. The member for Kalgoorlie, the member for Wagin and others have criticised and asked questions because of the parlous conditions obtaining in hospitals in the areas they represent. When we come to the question of schools, I find there is still a deplorable shortage of teachers, tremendous overcrowding of schoolrooms, and buildings being used to accommodate children that should no longer be used for that purpose. I know all the answers and explanations, but 18 months ago it was easy, in the words of the Government, to overcome them. But the same problems exist now as existed then. The fourth matter embraced by these cobwebs was that of transport. There is still tremendous dissatisfaction in this respect. If any member does not believe me I suggest he has a few words with the member for Nedlands. The Government made a few decisions, one of which was to buy a few more Australian Standard Garratt engines. Why it should have made such a decision, in view of the previous outcry, I do not know.

The Minister for Housing: Queensland is buying large numbers of them.

Mr. GRAHAM: The Government very hurriedly backed down from that proposi-

tion. It also said that it would provide shelters for the travelling public, at the various termini adjacent to the city block. But all I saw in regard to shelter, was the Government scuttling for shelter because of the criticism of a few people who, apparently, did not want to walk a hundred yards or so further than they had been accustomed to walk for many a long day. Those were the four matters in the cobwebs, and in each case the problem remains to be dealt with. I know that the Government, having assumed the Treasury bench, is aware of some of the problems and difficulties confronting any Government seeking to do something in connection with these matters, especially when they have their genesis in building construction. I have one or two words for the Honorary Minister for Supply and Shipping.

Mr. Marshall: Do not disturb her.

Mr. GRAHAM: She is sleeping peacefully at the moment, and she may continue so to do. I shall be exceedingly charitable to her.

The Honorary Minister: You are a narcotic for anything.

Mr. GRAHAM: The Minister being of the sex she is, makes me refrain from expressing in appropriate language what I would like in regard to that remark. All I wish to say is that I gave certain figures to the House when I last spoke on the general debate, illustrating that, notwithstanding all her claims and boasting with four inches, six inches and eight inches of space in "The Sunday Times" each week—

Mr. Marshall: Do not forget the first telephone call!

Mr. GRAHAM: —and odd articles in the daily Press from time to time, printed, apparently, to create in the minds of the public the belief that she was doing a wonderful service by bringing untold quantities of goods to Western Australia that would not otherwise have come here, the goods that arrived in Fremantle from the Eastern States in the last six months were less, in volume, than what came in the final six months of the administration of the Wise Government. One would have imagined, from all the publicity, and because there is a special Minister allegedly devoting herself to that particular task, that

about three times as much had come over. In fact, there was a falling off in the total of goods entering Western Australia.

I am sorry that I have to base some of my remarks on questions asked earlier in the session, but I asked the Honorary Minister whether half-a-dozen or so race-horses which were, I think, to have left by a boat departing from the Eastern States last Friday for Western Australia, were a sample of the results she was achieving in bringing additional quantities of much-needed goods to Western Australia. She replied that she felt such a facetious question did not warrant an answer. If the Honorary Minister for Supply and Shipping is so lacking in a sense of responsibility that she regards it as a matter to be treated lightly when race-horses are occupying valuable space—proceeding to and from the Eastern States—while much-needed items of foodstuffs, wearing apparel, machinery parts and a hundred and one other things are being left in the Eastern States, then I say, without a shadow of doubt, or any urging from any quarter, that she has fallen down on her job. If the Government had a sense of responsibility surely it would ask her to refrain from having published these silly reports that occupy so much valuable news space in the week-end Press and, unfortunately, in the daily Press also.

The Minister for Lands: The Press cannot think the same as you do in the matter, or they would not publish the reports.

Mr. GRAHAM: I have a suspicion that certain members on the Government side of the House wield influence in a number of spheres.

Last session, and also in marked form during this session, we have witnessed some shocking spectacles. Legislation has been introduced and passed by this Chamber only to be decimated, emasculated and massacred at the other end of this building. The most deplorable part of it all is that the Government accepts dictation from the Legislative Council.

This is supposed to be the McLarty-Watts Government, but anyone would be entitled, after seeing the demonstrations of weakness and supineness that we have witnessed during this session, to say that it is a Hearn-Watson Government, because,

whatever tune those gentlemen care to hum in the Legislative Council, their colleagues—almost to a man—vote with them in that place, and a sense of fear and inferiority overcomes the Liberal and Country Party members in this Chamber. They back down, bow, scrape and give way in every particular to what is sought by the Legislative Council. In other words, this is a complete surrender of the right of the Government to govern. On how many occasions have we seen the lack of responsibility and the sheer and utter irresponsibility of the supporters of the Liberal-Country Party Government in the Legislative Council? On numerous occasions the only members of that Chamber supporting the Ministers have been the few Legislative Council members in that Chamber.

The Minister for Housing: Do you not mean the few Labour members of that Chamber?

Mr. GRAHAM: Yes, the Labour members, who are so few in the Legislative Council. No matter what the policy or platform of the Liberal and Country Parties may be, and no matter what questions have been submitted to the people, irrespective of the policy speeches of the leaders of those parties the Liberal and Country Party supporters—as they are supposed to be—are revealed as the real opponents of the Government. If there are acts of such gross disloyalty to their own leaders and parties, on the part of these Legislative Council members, that is to be regretted, and it is to a great extent solely the concern of those parties.

The Minister for Housing: While the Labour members of that Chamber are loyal to the Government it does not matter much.

Mr. GRAHAM: Except that it means that legislation passed by this Chamber is meeting the darkest of fates.

Hon. A. H. Panton: They have to put the best face they can on it, up there.

Mr. GRAHAM: Bad as it might be to see public organisations being utterly unreliable, it is a matter for regret that what should be responsible public parties cannot be depended upon to give effect to the will of the people's representatives. It is an abject surrender to privilege, property and wealth when the McLarty-Watts Government so completely and utterly bends

its knee to the whims, wishes and dictates of the Legislative Council. Matters of public import, matters mentioned in Policy speeches, have been dealt with and passed by this House, but still the Legislative Council has been unimpressed by that fact. I wonder that the Government has not endeavoured to curb the influence of the Legislative Council. I asked that that should be done, but the Premier refused. In other words, this Government is prepared to accept the humiliating position in which it has allowed itself to be placed.

The most unfortunate feature is that this is giving confidence to members in the Legislative Council who care nothing for the wishes or the welfare of the people, because they are not responsible to the people or elected by them, and so in the future, irrespective of the political colour of the Government occupying the Treasury bench, it can expect the worst fate imaginable to befall the chief planks of its platform when measures are introduced, after its policy has been endorsed by the public at the polls. I would not have thought it possible for a Government to suffer so many rebuffs and indignities as this Government has suffered in the past few weeks. It is still my hope that, before it becomes altogether too late, the Government will do something to meet this situation in order that it might place this Chamber, a Chamber which is responsible to the public, in the position that it warrants and give it dignity and allow the public to have confidence in it; in other words, to permit it to be a Government which the McLarty-Watts Government certainly is not at the present time.

MR. BOVELL (Sussex) [9.30]: The debate on the Estimates gives us opportunities to cover a very wide field and I have listened with interest to the speeches. I consider the most interesting of all was made by the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe because it was brief and to the point.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Are you going to emulate him?

MR. BOVELL: I will, but I feel that as the Government has been criticised this would be an opportune time to let it know that at least one excellent record has been achieved during its control of the Treasury bench. I refer to the dairying industry and I want the Chamber to bear with me while

I quote figures of the factory butter production for the years 1918 to 1948. They will show a picture of the progress of the industry due to the great foresight and statesmanship of gentlemen that have occupied seats in this Chamber; men such as His Excellency the Governor, Sir James Mitchell and the late Mr. Collier. To those two gentlemen we owe a debt of gratitude.

To begin with the years end at the 31st December, but later on they end at the 30th June. The figures show the factory butter production for those years and they are as follows:—

Year ended the 31st December.	Factory butter production. lbs.
1918	888,741
1919	995,953
1920	1,218,681
1921	1,532,007
1922	1,518,092
1923	1,715,749
1924	1,660,242
*1926	1,872,745
Year ended the 30th June.	
1927	2,464,352
1928	2,847,929
1929	3,622,324
1930	4,723,132
1931	7,102,515
1932	8,347,833
1933	9,461,462
1934	9,825,362
1935	11,183,018
1936	10,967,662
1937	10,641,749
1938	13,702,317
1939	14,654,760
1940	14,002,180
1941	14,228,889
1942	15,658,898

Then came the worst days of the war—

1943	14,440,108
1944	13,786,338
1945	12,713,464
1946	12,553,346
1947	13,340,493
1948	15,815,951

* Period of 18 months.

That is an all-time record for factory butter production in Western Australia.

Mr. Needham: And Labour Minister for Agriculture were in office for 20 years out of the 30.

MR. BOVELL: The increase from the 30th June, 1947, to the 30th June, 1948 was 2,475,458 lb. Those figures in themselves give a true picture—

Mr. Reynolds: They are the reflection of a good season.

Mr. BOVELL:—of the progress of the dairying industry in Western Australia over the period since the group settlements were first established by His Excellency Sir James Mitchell and later carried on by the late Mr. Collier. I feel that as we today entertained His Excellency, this is an opportune time to show what we owe to Sir James and Mr. Collier for the part they have played in the progress of this State. I am not going to give the McLarty-Watts Government all the credit for having—

Hon. A. H. Panton: It should not get any.

Mr. BOVELL:—in the first full year of its administration gained an all-time high in factory butter production of Western Australia. However, it is helping the industry—

Mr. Reynolds: By how much per year does the Commonwealth Labour Government subsidise the dairying industry? It was £6,500,000 last year.

Mr. BOVELL: I am not concerned about what the Commonwealth Government does.

Mr. Hegney: Is it incorrect to say that the Commonwealth Government subsidised the industry by £7,500,000?

The Premier: You have already made one very long speech.

Mr. BOVELL: The progress of the industry is the result of the efforts of the farmers of this State, helped by the Governments of the State.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That is better.

Mr. BOVELL: And the Government of this State, with its limited resources, is making available to the dairy farmers heavy machinery in order that they may clear more land and therefore increase the production of this much-needed commodity. It must be remembered that as a foodstuff—and I think I am right in stating this—butter is the only rationed commodity produced in Australia; by that I mean rationed to the consumers of Australia. At the moment the dairy farmers of this country are doing their utmost, in company with their wives and their families, to increase production and it is absolutely impossible to get farm labour to assist them. This commodity is needed not only for our own consumers, but also for consumers all over the world.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: We all agree with that part of your statement.

The Minister for Lands: Let him have a go.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: Now tell us by how much the Commonwealth Government subsidises the industry.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. BOVELL: When the tumult and the shouting have died I will continue. I join with the member for Beverley in advocating the increased immigration of Northern Europeans—young Europeans who could be employed and absorbed in the farming industry of this State. I feel that the Minister in charge of immigration in this State realises the great necessity. In conclusion,—I said I would not detain members too long,—

Hon. A. H. Panton: Hear, hear!

Mr. BOVELL:—I wish to pay a tribute to the dairy farmers and farmers generally as well as their wives and families, because it is through their efforts that we have been able to achieve an all-time high in the production of butter in Western Australia for the year ended the 30th June, 1948.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Do not forget old Strawberry.

Mr. KELLY: I move—
That progress be reported.

The Premier:—No.

Motion put and negatived.

MR. KELLY (Yilgarn-Coolgardie) [9.41]: I have a rather large number of subjects to which I desire to refer, but it is not my intention to do so during the general debate on the Estimates. I shall mention one particular subject respecting which there will not be much opportunity for comment on the departmental Estimates. I have in mind the old people on the Goldfields. Some time ago, efforts were made in Kalgoorlie to establish a home for the old folk or, failing that, to provide cottages where they could reside and so avoid the necessity for their entering institutions in the metropolitan area. The position was examined thoroughly at the time, and the Government of the day foresaw what the present Government will probably have in mind, namely, the effect such a proposition would have upon the State generally insofar as many other centres would

ask for the establishment of homes of a type similar to that contemplated in Kalgoorlie. The Salvation Army was also interested in the possibility of establishing homes in Kalgoorlie and, with a view to going on with the project, had a certain area of land vested in it by the Government for the establishment of homes in that locality.

For reasons best known to themselves, the Salvation Army authorities did not continue with their effort, and matters have since remained in abeyance. That is regrettable not only from the standpoint of Kalgoorlie but from the possibility of such a movement extending to other centres. There are many hundreds of aged people in the goldmining areas who have lived most of their lifetime in that part of the State, who have become part and parcel of the community, whose entire interests are there, and whose relatives for the most part are located in mining areas. The old men are perfectly contented to remain there for the rest of their days, continuing their fossicking and the general means of livelihood they have followed for many years. As for the old ladies, their interests are there among their friends, their gardens and other amenities they have developed during a lifetime association with their particular centres.

It is not hard to appreciate that these old people have become so much a part of the wide spaces of the hinterland and would be very much opposed to coming to the metropolitan area to enter one or other of the institutions. The tragedy of it is more apparent when it becomes necessary for elderly couples who have lived for fifty years or more together, are compelled, because of advanced age and because there are no facilities locally for looking after them, to leave each other and live the remaining portions of their lives in separate homes. It is not human to condemn elderly people to live apart under those conditions. Certainly it would be preferable if we were able to provide some form of accommodation wherever there is an aggregation of these elderly folk to warrant such action being taken. It is here that I will make particular reference to one centre, although there may be other parts where similar conditions apply.

Coolgardie would furnish an excellent opportunity for an experiment to be made in the provision of homes for old people. In that area there are 72 pensioners of both

sexes. They are spread over a radius about two miles from the township and live in houses that might more appropriately termed humpies. Many are made from scrap materials and are definitely of the slum type, utterly unsuitable for the accommodation of elderly people. Many of them are living in complete isolation. Deaths have occurred there on several occasions, without any living person being present.

Hon. A. H. Panton called attention to the state of the Committee.

Bells rung and a quorum formed.

Mr. KELLY: I was observing that many of these elderly people have passed away without the comfort of human company at the time of death. Sometimes quite a considerable period has elapsed between the occurrence and the discovery of their death. Besides this being inhuman and ungodly, it causes great unpleasantness for various officials. Police officers, doctors and others have the unpleasant duty of attending to people who have been dead, sometimes for days and in very hot weather. For those reasons alone, it is time that we took a serious view of the situation that prevails not only in Coolgardie but also in other centres.

I believe that an old age community centre or colony could be established about 1½ miles from the Coolgardie Post Office, and in the place I would suggest for the centre is Toorak. This is the name of one of the centres, which is ideally situated and has a very pleasant outlook. It is situated on the pipeline and, as the soil is good the pensioners could lay out garden plots, and as it is only 1½ miles from the town, facilities are available in the shape of delivery service and electricity supply.

The Minister for Housing: Are there any unused buildings in the town that might be converted?

Mr. KELLY: There are no unoccupied buildings in the town and no other means of establishing these people in accommodation, apart from that which they now occupy. Eleven pensioners are already residing at Toorak, mostly for the reason that it is a nice spot and has the convenience afforded by the water supply. Such a colony would offer advantages from a medical point of view. The fact of 72 of these old people being scattered in and around the township

makes it almost impossible for them to receive regular medical attention. Consequently they suffer much hardship. Many of them are so isolated that they do not see other people except on those occasions when they walk into the township. If a colony were established doctors could make regular visits and, indeed, have expressed a willingness to do so.

General hygiene would receive full attention, which it is not getting today and sanitary arrangements, now conspicuous by their absence, could be provided. The contentment of these old people in their declining years would fully compensate for any outlay that would be involved.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: They are the people that blazed the track.

Mr. KELLY: Yes, and in the blazing of the track, the womenfolk, of whom there are quite a few in the Coolgardie area, played an important part. If cottages could be provided for them, say, some for married couples and others suitable for bachelors, the buildings need not be large or elaborate. If they were just homely and comfortable, that would be sufficient, for contentment would then be the lot of many of these old people.

Such a scheme should be well within the financial ambit of the State Government. The outlay would not be considerable. The inauguration of such a scheme would have the effect of relieving the pressure on the accommodation of some of the institutions in the metropolitan area which, we have been informed, are grossly overcrowded. When we intercede for these elderly people, we find ourselves confronted by great difficulties because of the accommodation in existing institutions being overtaxed.

The Minister for Housing: And by their staying where they are, they help to keep the life of the town going.

Mr. KELLY: Definitely so and by living amongst their friends, they enjoy full contentment. If it is beyond the financial power of the Government to take action along the lines I have suggested, perhaps something could be done by the McNess Housing Trust. I appeal to the Government to give consideration to my suggestions because by so doing it would be accomplishing a really humane work.

The Premier: We shall look into the matter. I promise you that.

Progress reported.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Western Australian Trotting Association Act Amendment. (Mr. Cornell in charge).
- 2, Foundation Day Observance (1949 Royal Visit).

Received from the Council.

BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

House adjourned at 10.1 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 9th November, 1948.

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