

to wait for separation allowance for their dependants until the particulars are sent to Melbourne and everything is finalised there. Apparently this results in delays extending up to three weeks in the case of dependants of men who have enlisted in Western Australia. I do not know whether that practice is rendered necessary by the need for consulting the National Register card, but if that were so surely the work could be decentralised to the extent of keeping the requisite particulars in this State.

Whilst I thank members for their patient hearing, I should like to repeat what I said earlier when I expressed the hope that members would have reasonable opportunity to discuss matters arising out of the war and Australia's effort in this great struggle. I realise that in the normal course of events such opportunities might be few and far between. In a crisis such as that which we are facing, with possibly the worst period still to come, and at a time when everybody in the community must play his part, I feel that an all-in effort such as we have to make will be a better and a stronger one if the people are kept more closely in touch with the governing authorities and the Government takes them more into its confidence.

On motion by Hon. W. J. Mann, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.22 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 1st August, 1940.

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

QUESTION—AUSTRALIAN AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL.

State's Representation.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM asked the Premier: 1, Has he seen a notice in the "West Australian" of the 31st July, advising that the

Minister for Industrial Development (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke) will represent this State at a meeting of the Australian Agricultural Council to be held in Sydney on the 12th and 13th August next? 2, In view of the fact that the questions to be discussed at this important meeting include a general review of Australia's rural industries with the object of formulating Australia's "all in" wartime agricultural policy and with the further specific object of deciding upon a policy for the stabilisation of the wheat industry, will he also make it possible for the Minister for Lands (Hon. F. J. S. Wise), who has always represented this State at these meetings and therefore should have an intimate knowledge of the vitally important matters to be discussed, to attend?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes. 2, Substitution of Ministers is not unusual where State representation at Commonwealth Conferences is requested and is considered necessary. As is usual, the case for Western Australia has been well prepared and will be adequately presented by the Minister undertaking the responsibility.

QUESTION—RAILWAYS AND TRAMWAYS.

Free Transport for War Service Personnel.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER asked the Premier: Is the Government taking any steps to provide free transport for the naval, military, and air force personnel on Government trains and trams.

The PREMIER replied: The whole question of rail and tram travel for personnel of naval, military and air force is now under consideration by the Government.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fourth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [4.33]: I am glad to notice, Mr. Speaker, that you have returned to your chair. The Claremont electorate has now become quite military in its aspect. Instead of being thousands of miles from the war centre, it might now be thought that the electorate was in the thick of the fight. We have warships in Gage

Roads, minesweepers out at sea, military camps, lorries full of soldiers, and generally a very active electorate, an example to the State. In addition, the Cottesloe Council staged a bomb raid for air raid precaution purposes. Planes dropped bombs of both kinds, and because the wind happened to be in the right direction a crowd of people got more than it bargained for in the matter of incendiary bombs. Our district, therefore, is doing its duty and trying to keep up with the times during this great crisis. Furthermore, Red Cross work is being actively carried on. I am pleased to say that the Claremont electorate is acting in every way as it should in this grave crisis.

I should like to follow the remarks of the member for West Perth (Mr. McDonald), who said that in addition to the necessity for striving to win the war, duties were cast upon this Parliament to study other questions that would follow upon the war. Prefacing a few remarks along these lines, I would point out that in this Chamber there are many things upon which we who belong to the three parties agree. We have a common policy, and yet that policy is not really achieved in a satisfactory manner. Because certain questions are common to all parties, they are more or less accepted, and the results achieved are not as we would like them to be. I have set out a few points that might be stressed. In the first place, I consider there are three "supremacies" that we all support in this Chamber. The first is the supremacy of Parliament itself. Unfortunately for some years, particularly during the last two, numerous scurrilous attacks have been made upon this Chamber through the Press. Many of them have been anonymous. Under the rules governing the situation the Press perhaps has no power to prevent persons from continually attacking this Chamber. They may be the same persons, but their attacks come very close to contempt of this Chamber. You, Mr. Speaker, may take very little notice of these letters that have appeared. You may say they are scurrilous and written by nondescript persons, and for that reason should be ignored. Our opponents in the war, as a first step to achieving dictatorship, as opposed to parliamentary government, burnt down the Reichstag. This continual slighting of Parliament, week after week, letter by letter, and often through conversations in the street, should be a matter for considera-

tion at the hands of this Chamber. Any person who wishes to exercise the right of free speech—something we all uphold—should do so over his own name, and when he is endeavouring to undermine the supreme Chamber in this State should not be permitted to do so under the cover of anonymity.

There is another supremacy that we all support, namely, the supremacy of the family. That, too, is endangered. The family system to which we were brought up as children is not at present very secure. First of all there is the fact that there is very little home life nowadays, and each family is not a large enough family. I believe the Arbitration Court provides for a family of two. Dutifully the public has provided the average family of two in accordance with the policy of that court. That is not sufficient for the maintenance of the State's population. If we are to maintain the supremacy of the family, we must build up the family to an average of three. The Government and all members must endeavour to draw up a system by which parents may be sufficiently encouraged to provide the additional member of their family.

The Minister for Lands: Would you tax the unproductive parents?

Mr. NORTH: It is easy to overlook the fact that someone will have to provide the money. If we are going to have a system by which it becomes attractive to parents to have at least three children, some attractive method must be provided. We know from our reading that totalitarian countries provide attractive arrangements. I am informed that in one country furniture is provided for a couple, on marriage, on loan. As the children come into the world the cost of the furniture is partially deducted, child by child. When about three children have arrived, the furniture belongs to the couple at no cost. I admit that the money has to be found. As the Minister for Lands interjected, we could tax other classes. The question is one that we are not touching, and it is one that ought to be considered now.

There is a third supremacy that we all support in this Chamber, under our system of living, namely, the supremacy of the individual, under which the individual has full rights. As with other members, I stand for that. That question has been discussed by the member for West Perth (Mr. McDonald) and other members from the point

of view of the unemployed, and as to how we can in some way improve their lot. If a committee is to be formed as suggested by the member for West Perth, the question can be given consideration. I shall not provide details of these matters, because they are so well known. There are other methods upon which we agree, and yet effect is not given to them. The first I will mention is uniformity of opportunities and conditions in industry. To achieve that is essential for Australia. The Minister for Industrial Development recently stated that great difficulty was experienced in securing the establishment of new industries in this State and that we should endeavour to induce the people in the Eastern States to increase their basic wage to the Western Australian standard. That might be desirable, and, somehow or other, all States will have to arrive at a uniform system regarding wages and conditions if we in Western Australia are to secure the population and the development that we desire. That represents one question that is immediately before us for achievement by means of conferences with representatives of the Eastern States, without which uniformity of opportunity and conditions in the various industries cannot become an accomplished fact. If that objective is not attained, Western Australia must lag far behind the rest of Australia from the standpoint of industrial development, and we will continue to see our youth leaving the State to seek employment in other parts of the Commonwealth.

Another important point upon which we are all agreed is that the systems of education throughout Australia should be more uniform. To accomplish that end might involve a demand upon the Federal Government for financial assistance. Certainly it is not unreasonable to suggest that citizens in every part of Australia should be able to enjoy similar standards of educational facilities. They should not be expected to submit to varying standards in the different States. The very best that obtains in the Eastern States should be available for Western Australians. We should not be penalised here because, owing to the huge task of developing our enormous area with little capital available for the undertaking, the necessity arises to deprive our children of better educational facilities. If the committee that has been suggested were formed, that matter could be referred to it for con-

sideration, with a view to securing some subsidy from the Federal Government so that the educational opportunities and standards in this State could be materially improved. Another uniformity respecting which we are all agreed, is that relating to railway gauges and standards. That requirement is as urgent to-day as ever. Naturally I realise we cannot advocate the expenditure of public funds on such a project while the war is in progress, but nevertheless preliminary work could be carried out in preparing for all the various details and tasks incidental to an effort of such magnitude. If there is any undertaking that should be put in hand when the war is over, it is the unification of railway gauges and standards, which would be one means of absorbing labour and encouraging industry. Surely members will agree that it is ridiculous that we can have uniformity in postal services so that those available in Perth and our country districts are equal to those enjoyed by the people in the Eastern States while at the same time there are such hopelessly varying railway standards and conveniences for passengers and those who make use of the railways for commercial purposes.

Leaving that phase for a moment, I come to the three "decencies" to which we all subscribe, despite which they are not completely achieved to-day. Perhaps the fact that they are not fully accomplished is largely because we are all in agreement with them, so that what is everyone's business becomes no one's business. The first relates to nutrition. We all agree upon a minimum ration rate such as that established years ago by the Mitchell Government, but the medical question still remains that a full belly is not necessarily a proper nutrified person. All are agreed that certain vegetables, fruit and milk should be consumed by everyone in order that we may have a healthy community. Despite that fact, we have formulated no system by which that result can be accomplished. Many proposals have been submitted, but a full scheme is still in abeyance. That should not be so.

The Minister for Lands: A tremendous volume of research work is in progress in England on that phase.

Mr. NORTH: That is so. Incidentally I notice that the troops here are being served with brown bread. Full 20 years of talk has continued on that subject before such an epoch-making change has

been effected. So far as I am aware there was no brown bread issued during the previous war. Clothing and shelter are two other essentials that have been mentioned many times during debates in this House. The member for Victoria Park (Mr. Raphael) tabled one motion, and the member for Maylands (Mr. Shearn) submitted one regarding housing. We all agree that there should be a dwelling house for every family, but we know that that is not the position. Thousands of our citizens are living in half-houses, rooms or other forms of tenements. That is certainly not desirable. No well-planned scheme is available to deal with that problem. Possibly if some such plan were evolved, the demand upon the building trade would be such that supplies of workers and materials would not be available. Nevertheless that is an admirable objective that should ever be before us, rather than that the demand should be left solely to the individual who requires the provision of a home, whether it be a worker's home or otherwise.

Then there is the duty that devolves upon every person to accept employment when offered to him. Every person should be forced to accept employment in such circumstances. I have no time for the system that allows the payment of the dole to people who will not accept work when it is offering. That system should be stopped. I would not mind if people who refused to take work when it was offered to them were sent to gaol. To my mind we should not resort to half-starving individuals in order to force them to accept work, but I believe that such individuals should be punished by being temporarily deprived of their liberty. Then also there is the duty to maintain dependants. Next I come to "rights." There is the right to secure employment. Every person who enjoys citizenship should have the right to some form of employment. To a large extent that is the position today, but it is not quite fully effective. There are other objectives not yet completely attained although we are in agreement respecting them. Those I have mentioned will suffice for the time being. The contention may be raised that the expenditure upon the projects I have outlined is today beyond our economic capacity. Certainly a good case has been made out on those lines during the years between the war of 1914-18 and the present conflict. For years the ex-

pert economists told us that all was being done that could be undertaken at the time. Then the present war came as a bombshell. Now where are all those expert theorists who have been an influence in our public affairs? What have they to say today? Only a few years ago we were hardly permitted to feed our unemployed. It was economically unsound, and could not be done. Today we are manufacturing tanks, aeroplanes, guns and many other products to an extent unheard of years ago. What a marvellous transformation! Furthermore, the necessary machine tools, stocks and dies and all sorts of fittings essential to the building up of large factories are now being made in Australia because supplies are not available from overseas. So what a transformation confronts us! Let us put a question to these expert theoretical economists who got their ideas from academic text books.

Mr. Marshall: Ask the member for Swan where the money is coming from.

Mr. Sampson: It is certainly not coming from the Murchison.

Mr. NORTH: Earlier we were told we could not even maintain factories in Melbourne and Sydney. We were told we could not make steel or turn out other requirements. It was said they were hot-house industries, absolutely artificial industries. We were told that we should go back to the land and grow wheat and wool because that was all Australia and Western Australia could do. To-day, however, not only are we supplying steel for overseas but we are also making all the latest war requirements—armaments, tanks and planes—and are even providing our own capital plant. What a wonderful transformation! I want to know who is the economist that is advising the Governments how to do all these things. Where did they dig him up? Where did they find the man to advise Australia to make tanks and aeroplanes? I believe that a dozen aeroplanes a week are being manufactured in two factories. Where is the economist who authorised such enterprise? Where is the man who is countenancing this heinous idea that we in Australia are able to do things ourselves and need not import these requirements from overseas?

Mr. Marshall: What is puzzling me is where he is getting the money from.

Mr. NORTH: I know that question is one that gives the hon. member great concern,

but it does not worry me so much. I was in the last war and I know it was as easy to get the money then as it is now.

Mr. Marshall: But I want to know the answer, because I want to tell the member for Swan.

Mr. NORTH: As a result of the menace with which we are faced it appears to have been possible for Australia to make a fine show and to demonstrate to the world that we are not the fools we were thought to be, that we are not mere hewers of wood and drawers of water. My claims with regard to the necessity for the proper feeding and housing of the people and the modernising of our railway system are mere bagatelles compared with what is actually being done in the directions I have mentioned in Australia to-day. Never again must we be told that expenditure on the unification of the railway systems would be a shocking waste of money and an uneconomic work. For this week we expect a £1,500,000 order for the production of shells to blow away into the sky. Yet to modernise our railway gauges was declared to be uneconomic, and as a result we shall be the last country in the world to achieve uniformity in this regard. Who is the economist that declared Australia was able to do all the things that are now being done? Let us get hold of him and make him live for ever, if possible, because he is the man we are looking for.

The Minister for Lands: Necessity is the same old mother of invention.

Mr. NORTH: Then she may be his wife. When peace returns let us not lose sight of the fact that all these things are apparently so easy of accomplishment. Let us hold on to the fact so that there shall not be in our midst in the future as there has been for the last 20 years unused men and resources in colossal numbers.

MR. TONKIN (North-East Fremantle) [4.53]: There are many subjects such as unemployment, rates of sustenance, post-war reconstruction and the like that might well provide matter for an appropriate speech on the motion now before the House. But there is a subject which in my opinion far transcends all those I have mentioned, and that is the security of this country and the safety of its inhabitants. We are all aware of the tremendous danger that exists,

but some of us treat it lightly; some of us are prepared to take up the attitude that we will wait until danger comes right home to us. Then there are those who believe we should not wait until it is too late to do anything, but that, recognising the danger, we should do something immediately. It is useless for us to disregard these questions and to carry on quite placidly and complacently. However much we may worry some people it is essential that we should face up to the situation at once. The first point to be considered is whether there is a possibility of an invasion of Australia. Once we can perceive the possibility we can leave alone the probability and conclude that the maximum effort must be made so that if that possibility should occur we shall be ready to meet it. Unfortunately this country has not made a very big effort towards achieving maximum preparedness to meet an eventuality. True, the Minister for the Army was recently given an efficiency medal, but I submit that the presentation was somewhat premature. He could scarcely have earned it yet.

Mr. Marshall: But it will scare off the enemy, will it not?

Mr. TONKIN: If he has earned it I would say that those who presented it to him are very easily satisfied, because go where you will you will find very little evidence of efficiency in the matter of preparation for the job in hand. Do not hon. members know that when the National Security Act was passed it was intended to take power to call up young men who had attained the age of 21 and train them immediately? Are hon. members not also aware that no sooner had training commenced than it had to be stopped because the country could not train men for overseas as well as fit men for home defence? Later it was discovered that to make some show of providing for home defence was essential, with the result that recruiting for overseas was discontinued in order that the training of these compulsory trainees could once more be undertaken. And this in a country where the Minister for the Army receives a medal for efficiency!

We must realise that there is a very grave danger of invasion, and that nothing short of the absolute maximum of preparedness will suffice. The trend of modern warfare has been kind to this country and has be-

stowed upon us certain distinct advantages. The most powerful weapons to-day appear to be bombing planes and tanks, but because of our position in the world neither of these two weapons can be used very effectively against us. It would be extremely difficult for any nation to bring large tanks against us such as were used in France. On the other hand we could use tanks against an enemy attempting to invade this country. Again, for any country to attempt the bombing of Australia on a large scale would be a hazardous business, whereas we would be in a very sound position if we had numerous bombing planes, because we could very seriously harass an invading force. But are we attempting, to the maximum of our capacity, to secure those tanks and machines? Certainly we are making some effort, but is it the maximum effort? We have a very small population, a population, if properly trained, adequate to defend this country against any invading force that can be brought against it, but not adequate if only a portion of its people is to be trained. There are thousands of men and women throughout the country who are imploring the Government to train them, to equip them, to have them ready to meet the danger should it arise, and what does the Government do? It disregards the offer of those people; it makes no attempt to mobilise this very powerful stream of potential voluntary effort that is running to waste.

True, a scheme was brought forward to enable returned soldiers to organise and train, but I regret that neither the Government nor the returned soldiers can appreciate that the returned men are but a small minority of the people who could and should be trained. We have approached the returned soldiers and asked them to cloak the ordinary citizen with their authority so that the ordinary citizen may be trained and prepared to defend his heritage, but the returned soldiers say, "We do not want to play with you; we want to look after ourselves."

Mr. Doney: Where did you get information of that kind?

Mr. TONKIN: From the executive of the Returned Soldiers' League.

Mr. Seward: Well, we are doing it in the country.

The Minister for Mines: That is silly talk.

Mr. TONKIN: If it is silly, the State Executive of the R.S.L. is responsible. I regret that the Minister is so ill-informed on the subject, and I shall be obliged to recount the circumstances.

The Minister for Mines: Let us have them.

Mr. TONKIN: As members are aware, an organisation was formed at Fremantle called the Home Service Corps. When the meeting was called, it was restricted to male members of the community and over 700 attended. The meeting was most enthusiastic, and those present showed their willingness to do everything possible to assist the country. Very soon afterwards, it appeared that these unofficial gatherings were to be frowned upon by the authorities, and so we approached the member for the district—the Leader of the Federal Opposition—with a request that representations be made to the Minister for the Army. All we have had, however, is an acknowledgment that the case has been placed before him. We got into touch with Senator Collett, met him by deputation, and explained that it would be a good thing if the returned soldiers would cloak ordinary citizens with their authority and undertake their training as well as that of their own members. To the credit of Senator Collett, I wish to say he realised that the idea was an excellent one and promised to bring it before the Minister for the Army and see what could be done.

At the same time we got into touch with the R.S.L. in Perth and I spoke to the President, Mr. Yeates. I said, "The Fremantle Home Service Corps is desirous of putting before your league a proposition under which the league would take into its ranks for training citizens desirous of being so prepared, so long as the league devised some scheme under which the ordinary citizen would be permitted to train and be given some cloak of authority, which is essential. It appeared to us that the best way to obtain that authority would be through the league." In other words we suggested co-operation between the returned soldiers, who knew something about the business, and the ordinary citizen, who knew nothing but wanted to know. Mr. Yeates said that no good purpose would be served by having a deputation, but that if we wrote a letter, consideration would be

given to the request and we would be informed of the decision in due course. In due course we received a letter. I am sorry that I have not the letter before me. In effect it said that the R.S.L. executive had considered the question and, whilst recognising some merit in it, had its hands full with its own organisation. In other words, "We do not want to play with you; run away."

The Minister for Mines: Nothing of the sort. They could train themselves.

Mr. TONKIN: In South Perth the returned soldiers saw the wisdom of the proposal and, without the authority of the R.S.L. executive, admitted civilians to swell their numbers. They have been holding parades each Sunday morning and training those men, but have been doing it without the authority of the R.S.L. executive.

Mr. Doney: They did not require the R.S.L.'s authority. That is the point.

Mr. TONKIN: Then will the hon. member tell me why the R.S.L. executive did not send that reply to us instead of the one we got?

Mr. Doney: You must ask the executive that question.

Mr. TONKIN: And the executive would not give me the answer that the hon. member has just given. To put the question hard upon the hon. member, if he says no authority is required, will he take the responsibility if we act accordingly and trouble occurs?

Mr. Doney: I would not mind that at all. We are doing it in many country centres without authority.

Mr. TONKIN: Very well; if there is nothing wrong with it and it can be done without authority, that shows it is practicable.

Mr. Doney: Yes.

Mr. TONKIN: It shows that our proposal would not overburden the returned soldiers' organisation.

Mr. Doney: I do not know about its overburdening the executive. It does not overburden the branches.

Mr. TONKIN: Then what is holding the R.S.L. executive back?

Mr. Doney: You must put that question to the executive.

Mr. TONKIN: I hope the hon. member will use his position as a member of this House, and as a returned soldier to see that the State Executive of the R.S.L. wakes up.

Mr. Warner: It might be awake, but cannot say all it would like to.

Mr. Thorn interjected.

Mr. TONKIN: I could tell the hon. member privately matters that I do not wish to divulge publicly. The returned soldiers do not want this movement.

Mr. Doney: That is nonsense.

Mr. TONKIN: I can give proof of the statement.

The Minister for Mines interjected.

Mr. TONKIN: We do not need to argue about the niceties of the situation. The important point is that every man available for training should be trained. Once we see the possibility of an invasion, nothing short of our maximum effort will avail. If we are going to have a defence force of any value at all, it must be absolutely the strongest we can provide. What is the use of training a proportion of the population to meet an invasion? If there is an invasion, it will be no half-hearted affair; it will be conducted on a tremendous scale. Therefore, it will be useless to attempt to meet it with half-hearted measures.

Let me quote from a leading article in the "West Australian" of the 15th June. The sentiments therein expressed are those felt by every Australian who has the welfare of his country at heart. Members must admit that very little has been done to follow up the suggestions mentioned in the article. If the worst happens and we are not prepared, we shall have people running around and saying, "If we had only known or if we had only done this and that, things would have been different." Portion of the article reads—

Britain and the nations of the British Commonwealth, India and the Colonies, knit together and defended by sea-power, their capacity for self-defence on land, sea and air growing in each great unit, could indeed continue to fight alone, and perhaps may soon have to do so. We must today cast aside with impatient contempt every kind of complacency and slackness that often in our history has delayed final victory. Here in Australia we are so far removed from danger in miles that we find difficulty in realising how close to us is that danger in fact. The temptation to loot will thereby be increased for any Government of any nation that is tempted by loot.

The time has therefore come for the Australian Government to take powers to mobilise the whole wealth, industrial resources and manpower of the Commonwealth. To-day if one machine is working one shift per day when it could be worked three shifts by the assembling of men to work it, if any machine

capable of being used in the defence of the country is being unused or used for any other purpose, if one man capable of learning to fight or work for his country and its cause is not being employed in that service, then in that degree the Australian people are failing their own nationhood, wilfully imperilling their liberties, and are wanting as men and women to the hour.

But the people are ready. It is the tremendous responsibility of the Federal Government to mobilise leaders, and with the help of the National Register, compiled before the war, to set everyone to the work in which he or she can best serve, in order that Australia may give her utmost and her best, wherever her help is called for, to the securing of her own future and the Empire's ultimate victory within which her freedom lives. For the first time in our history the danger is real.

That sums up the situation. If there is any man capable of being trained and not being trained, then to that extent the nation is falling down on its job. That is the position today because there are hundreds, nay thousands of men, going untrained who might be trained. All we can get from the Minister for the Army is that he will not countenance unofficial armies. If that is so, why in the name of goodness does not he make them official armies? There are thousands of men throughout the continent who are giving their time on Sunday mornings and on week nights, anxious to contribute something. They are looking for the opportunity, looking for leaders. And what do they meet with? Disappointment everywhere. I heard the Minister for Air and Civil Aviation say the other evening that one of the difficulties which confronted the Federal Government was the fact that in training men at work, dislocation of industry was brought about, and that such dislocation had to be safeguarded against. That is true; but one can surmount any difficulty if one has the will to do it. The Minister's idea of training men is that the only effective method is to take them away from their work and put them into camps for long periods. Whilst that may be the best method, yet if one cannot utilise the best method, then one should resort to any method that will achieve the desired result. Thousands of men are willing to give their time for hours every evening, and their Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings, to meet the needs of defence, if the Government will only make provision for their training. It is criminal that that has not been done. If we train every man available in this country, and he is not needed, all

the better. On the other hand, if he is needed, then we are ready. And what a hopeless rabble we shall be in the present situation! My plea, I am willing to admit, could be better made in the Federal Parliament; but whilst the defence of Australia is the responsibility of the Federal Government and may not be the responsibility of the State Government, yet it is the concern of the State Government and the concern of the people of Western Australia.

My plea is that not a moment should be lost, that plans shall be drawn up to make it possible to follow the lines of this article, to train every man available for training, to put to work every man available for work, so that we shall be able to make the maximum effort, and so that every day that goes past will find us better fitted for the task than the day before. But how are we proceeding? How much further advanced are we today than we were yesterday? A trifle perhaps. We should be grateful for the time at our disposal, and our determination should be to use every available minute to its maximum capacity for providing training to equip these men. Then, with our natural advantages and our geographical situation, with the spirit of our people, we would be indeed a tough nut for any invading force to crack. Anyone who has recently read the papers knows that we might be left very much to ourselves should we be faced with invasion. The Press this week has indicated that the ships of Great Britain might be required elsewhere, that a long-range blockade of Japan might be imposed. That long-range blockade of Japan, however, would not mean very much aid to us. If we are to be thrown upon our own resources, then nothing short of our maximum preparedness will suffice. Whilst there are numerous subjects to which we could give our attention, whilst post-war reconstruction is one to which we could give a great deal of attention, we have to win the war first; otherwise post-war reconstruction will not worry us. Therefore let us bend all our energies to the task; let us get together and think out the best method of obtaining the maximum output from the country, and the maximum preparedness in every way. Let us co-operate; let us see that every day will be one step further forward in the necessary preparation. Europe offers us no end of object lessons. We have seen how in Great Britain it has been necessary to speed

up in the last few weeks; how there the people have raised home defence organisations, arming the men and the women. When we look at Australia and ask what has been done here in the last six or eight months, we do not get a very satisfactory answer. I am not here to blame anybody. I am trying to ensure that from henceforth we shall do everything possible to bring about an alteration. My idea of the subject is, confessedly, summed up in these lines of Longfellow—

Trust no future, howe'er pleasant;
Let the dead past bury its dead;
Act, act in the living present,
Heart within and God o'erhead!

MR. PATRICK (Greenough) [5.22]: I endorse the remarks of the member for Pilbara (Mr. W. Hegney), who stated that he thought speeches should not be long at this stage in our history; but I also agree with the member for Mt. Magnet (Mr. Triat), who last night said, in effect, that we should retain our right to criticise Governments. Undoubtedly that is the correct attitude to adopt. We have noticed how in recent days there has been a wonderful exemplification of that attitude in the Mother of Parliaments, where even the Government comprising representatives of every party has had to bow to destructive criticism from members. I noticed last night, when the member for Mt. Magnet was speaking, that he shocked even members of the Ministry out of their customary state of complacency. The Premier himself was sitting up and taking notice while the member for Mt. Magnet was speaking.

The Premier: I hope I take notice of the speeches of all members.

Mr. PATRICK: That feature was exceptionally perceptible last night. The member for Mt. Magnet really did rouse Ministers from their usual condition of complacency.

The Minister for Mines: We are never in that condition.

Mr. PATRICK: Therefore I shall probably offer a few criticisms not of members of the Ministry but of the results of appointments made by them. This is a time when we want the people to be in a contented frame of mind. However, in parts of my electorate some of the farmers are in a state of seething discontent by reason of the actions of the Prices Commissioner in regard to meat. In my opinion that gentleman

was foolish to rush into a matter of this kind. As regards the price of sheep, there have been occasions when I have sold sheep at 50 per cent. above the present Midland price and, extraordinary to relate, meat was no dearer in the shops then than it is to-day. I have also sold sheep at a lower price than that of to-day, without meat being much cheaper in the shops. Therefore in interfering in a matter of this kind one is treading on highly dangerous ground. The more the Prices Commissioner rushes into the papers with explanations, the bigger mess he makes of the thing. In fact, I consider that, as during the last war, a Prices Commissioner should have been appointed who had some knowledge of commercial affairs. During the last war the retired manager of a big emporium in this city was in charge of price-fixing, and he handled the matter in a very satisfactory manner. In this case, however, the Prices Commissioner seems to have been stampered by a considerable amount of bluff. We heard retail butchers stating on the one hand that if the price of meat was reduced they would close up their shops, and stating on the other hand that if they could not get the license system there would be other butchers starting in business. They wanted the license system to prevent that. So they were not perfectly logical in that respect. The weak point in this price-fixing business is that the producers of the meat were not in any way consulted. Had they been consulted, probably they would have been able to point out that Western Australia is in the midst of one of the worst stock seasons it has ever experienced, and that only by artificial means were stock put on the market. In fact, the cost of production is a main factor in any price fixing system. A survey of the actions of the Federal Price Fixing Commissioner, Professor Copland, is sufficient to establish that point. When he had to deal with the position regarding superphosphate, he did not consult the users of that fertiliser to ascertain whether they could pay the price. He fixed the price on the additional cost imposed upon the manufacturer. In those circumstances, the price of superphosphate has gone up not less than 30s. a ton. Members will realise that superphosphate is as vital to Australian agriculture as munitions are to the prosecution of the war. Prob-

ably there is no other country in the world where fertiliser is so necessary in the practice of agriculture. In Australia in 1938, the latest year for which I have been able to get statistics, not less than 1,200,000 tons of superphosphate were manufactured. Taking that product at 30s. per ton, members will appreciate what a tremendous load has been placed upon the primary producer. In Western Australia during 1938, 249,600 tons of artificial manures were used. That quantity exceeded more than that used in any other State of Australia except Victoria, which serves to show how essential supplies of superphosphate are for the producers in this State. In Victoria, 190,000 tons out of 360,000 tons were used for pastures alone. In Western Australia the use of superphosphate has been essential right from the beginning of our agricultural development, whereas in South Australia in the early days farmers were able to secure 30 or 40 bushel crops from virgin country, without the use of any manure whatever. From the very inception we have not been able to do that in Western Australia.

I agree with the member for Irwin-Moore (Mr. Berry) that the price for wheat and other commodities should be brought into line with the increase in costs. An alternative to that is that the Government, as a war measure, should shoulder the burden of the increased prices of commodities that are absolutely essential for production. I notice that price-fixing commissioners are very reluctant to deal with the wealthy oil companies and I would like to quote, for the benefit of the Premier, a letter that I wrote to the "West Australian." Probably he was too busy to notice the communication, which dealt with the price of petrol at Geraldton and read as follows:—

In the House of Representatives on May 15, answering Mr. Gregory, with regard to "reconciling the high petrol prices ruling in country districts with prices in city areas," the Minister for Supply (Sir Frederick Stewart) said, "this was essentially a matter for the companies." The Minister should at least establish prices at outports in Western Australia, on the same basis as at the port of Fremantle. This would largely govern and bring about a reduction of prices in many country areas. In the annual report of the Midland Railway Co. appears the following:—"The establishment during the year of bulk storage containers at the port of Geraldton, for delivery of petrol and oil supplies direct from overseas tanker vessels, has deprived the company of a yearly

freight of between £10,000 and £12,000 as these supplies were formerly transported by our railway in tank waggons from Fremantle to Geraldton.

Prices for petrol at Geraldton, however, are still based on Fremantle plus railway freight. The northern country areas consequently reap no advantage from having a port at Geraldton, even though petrol is landed there direct in bulk.

I think that letter speaks for itself. Members will appreciate that petrol formerly railed over the Midland company's line is now handled in Geraldton in bulk, being landed direct from tankers. Notwithstanding that fact, at a centre 60 miles from the port, petrol is 8d. a gallon dearer than it is in the metropolitan area. I believe the two major oil companies whose supplies are being landed in bulk, make the excuse that some of the oil still has to be railed. That is extraordinary, when we realise how in the past some of the big oil companies have crushed competitors by unfair methods. To-day those companies are prepared to sit down and take advantage of the extra price. If the suggested pooling scheme is introduced, I just wonder what the attitude of these companies will be, seeing that the oil of the different companies will be pooled. For my part, I do not think there is any justification whatever for the price charged at the outport. I took this matter up with the Federal Minister for Supply (Sir Frederick Stewart), but I do not think that he even read the copy of the letter he was sent, because he said—

This is a proposal that is frequently being raised and I am afraid there is not much prospect of its adoption, the matter really being one for the business interests concerned.

What he had in mind was a system of uniform prices of petrol in the country and metropolitan districts. If the Minister had read the letter, he would have appreciated the fact that it concerned a different set of circumstances altogether. There is no justification whatever for the price charged for petrol in Geraldton, yet no action has been taken in the matter. I regard it as a purely local affair, the circumstances surrounding which may not apply in any other part of Australia. I view it as a matter for action by the local price fixing commissioner.

The Lieut.-Governor's speech contains a reference to the Commonwealth Government asking that the Agricultural Council should take steps to guide agricultural production. I regret that at the next confer-

ence in the Eastern States the Minister for Lands will not be in attendance. I am not in the habit of handing out bouquets, but I believe the Minister is one of the outstanding men at such conferences. At the forthcoming gathering, a very important question will be considered regarding the wheat position. The Minister for Lands has probably a better grip of the position than any other Minister who may be in attendance at the conference.

The Premier: That matter will not be decided definitely at the conference.

Mr. PATRICK: It is about time it was decided definitely.

The Minister for Lands: The problem is rather difficult to decide.

Mr. PATRICK: The time is overdue for someone to give a lead to the farmers regarding the wheat situation. No advice has been given to them as to whether they should put in more wheat or less wheat. In the face of that, we get the sort of stuff that has been published recently.

The Minister for Lands: You would need more than the wisdom of Solomon to do what you suggest.

Mr. PATRICK: The Minister for Commerce, Mr. Cameron, had something to say the other day when he told a deputation of wheatgrowers—

He was coming round strongly to the opinion that if the Commonwealth was to be asked to assume financial responsibility for the troubles of primary industry, it must have absolute powers over that industry.

The Minister for Lands: There is nothing new in that suggestion.

Mr. PATRICK: No, and probably if it had not been, I shall not say for the "stupidity" but rather for the lack of foresight of the present Ministry, the Commonwealth might have had that power. The Premier will know that members opposite strongly opposed the proposal to give the Commonwealth power to deal with primary products. Had that been done, the Federal Minister for Commerce would not be in a position now to say, as he did to the deputation—

The present system of divided control was resulting in a game of passing the buck between the Commonwealth and States.

That seems to me to be the position. The State Government would doubtless be much more advantageously situated if the complete responsibility had been placed upon

the Commonwealth Government, so that it could handle the whole business.

The Minister for Works: At any rate, these strong advocates are not always very reliable men.

Mr. PATRICK: I do not know whether the Agricultural Council wishes it, but the fact remains that the wheat industry today is being slowly strangled to death. At conferences, from time to time, the question is discussed and again discussed, and yet the Premier tells us that the problem is not yet settled.

The Premier: I said it would not be definitely decided at the forthcoming conference.

Mr. PATRICK: Not yet have we any plan to secure the stability of the industry. I do not agree to the necessity, as the member for Irwin-Moore (Mr. Berry) suggested, of turning our wheat into power alcohol. This morning I was listening to someone talking over the air and he referred to substitutes for petrol. He said that all the substitutes that could be adopted would not supply more than seven per cent. of the quantity imported into Australia. In those circumstances, I do not think the hon. member's suggestion would have any great effect. As a matter of fact, we shall not have an enormous surplus of wheat in Australia. Last year we had an abnormally heavy crop, one of the biggest crops that has ever been grown in the history of Australia. Had it been a normal crop, probably we would not have had any carry-over at all this year. The estimated carry-over is not very much more than the excess of last year's crop over a normal crop. The point, however, is that this year the Australian crop will be much smaller than normally and probably, before the season is over, we may be fortunate if we have a carry-over. I do not think I am far out.

The Premier: I hope not.

Mr. PATRICK: We should formulate some definite policy with regard to wheat. Costs are increasing all the time; 30s. per ton on superphosphate is enormous, and there is no advance in the price of wheat to make up for the increased cost. Unless the position is improved, unless we find some method of stabilising the industry, it will be slowly but surely strangled to death. To show the difference between Australia and some other countries, I may add that Canada this year

increased her area under crop by 2,000,000 acres.

I notice that another question has been raised in the Eastern States papers. An extensive campaign has been carried on in the Eastern States for unification and abolition of State Parliaments. Hon. members opposite should be jubilant to hear of this campaign, because I understand unification has always been a plank of their platform.

The Minister for Labour: The past President of the Primary Producers' Association advocated it.

Mr. PATRICK: The past President of the Primary Producers' Association raised the question at the Primary Producers' Conference. A motion to abolish State Parliaments received support from one member only, another seconding the motion for the purpose of discussion. Opposition to it may therefore be said to have been unanimous. While unification seems to be one of the fundamental planks of the Labour platform, I think members opposite are rather ashamed of it, because I cannot recollect having heard them mention it at election time in Western Australia, not even during the course of a Federal election.

Mr. Thorn: No. They are all good Western Australians.

Mr. PATRICK: The only member who was consistent in his advocacy of that plank in the Labour platform was Mr. Kennelly, when he occupied a seat on the Opposition benches of this Chamber.

Mr. Hughes: What is wrong with the consistency of the present member for East Perth?

Mr. PATRICK: I do not know the opinion of the present member for East Perth on that question or on any other question. Personally, I support the present Federal system; in my opinion, it is the only system possible in Australia, with its widely-scattered population. Our system is modelled on that of the United States, which has never considered the question of abolishing it. In fact, the United States has extended the system; originally there were 13 States in the Union, while to-day there are no fewer than 48. Therefore, we shall probably see an extension of the Federal system in Australia, rather than the abolition of State Governments. I agree, however, that the cost of administering the States could be reduced tremendously. I

mean not only cost of government, but cost of Parliament. I am not now giving this as a party opinion, but I have always thought that this Parliament could be reduced considerably in numbers and yet function just as well as it is functioning to-day. A reduction could be made in the number of Ministers sitting opposite. In South Australia, which has a larger population, there are only four Ministers in the Legislative Assembly, while here I see seven Ministers sitting opposite.

A non-party measure which I think should be brought down this session is a new Companies Act. In this respect, we can take advantage of work that has been done in the Eastern States. I noticed a paragraph in the "West Australian" newspaper recently with regard to the Victorian Companies Act, which it is said entailed three years preparation and two years discussion in Parliament. That Act is generally accepted in legal and business circles as one of the most effective Companies Acts in the Empire. It contains many provisions that are necessary in this State. One of them relates to the examination of public companies; provided a shareholder owns a certain percentage of shares in a company, whether public or proprietary, he has the right to demand an investigation, by officers appointed by the Government, into the company's affairs. Such a provision has proved to be necessary in this State. The Victorian Act also provides that each shareholder must be provided with a copy of the company's balance sheet. The Act also contains a provision which is included by amendment in our Companies Act, but in a very feeble way. The amendment, which was moved by the member for Swan (Mr. Sampson), provides for the prevention of house-to-house hawking of shares. The Victorian Act provides an effective check on the practice of share-hawking and house-to-house canvassing, which in the past have been attended by so much fraud and dishonesty. As I say, the proposed measure is a non-party one and, with the precedent of the Victorian Act, it should not be difficult to draft a Bill.

The Premier: We already have a draft.

Mr. PATRICK: Yes, but I believe the draft has been in existence for a great number of years.

The Premier: No. It is a recent draft.

Mr. PATRICK: I am very glad to have that information.

The Premier: The present company law consists of an Act and about 15 amendments.

Mr. PATRICK: I regret to notice the falling off in subscriptions to the charities consultations, as these consultations have been responsible for much of the finance required by a number of our deserving charitable institutions. Probably one of the reasons for the falling off is the tremendous call for contributions to local patriotic funds. The Ministry could assist the Lotteries Commission considerably by cleaning up starting price betting. Starting price bookmakers are a blot on this community, especially in wartime.

Mr. Fox: Why not extend that to horse-racing as well?

Mr. PATRICK: That can be done, if the hon. member so wishes. I do not know whether this will interest the Minister for Labour, but recently when I was in the Eastern States I was told in the various capitals that starting price betting was Western Australia's greatest industry. I agree with the member for West Perth (Mr. McDonald) that sufficient advantage has not been taken of the services of members of this House, and that some use could be made of them on committees and in other directions. In view of the present war situation there is no time for party bickering; we must all stand absolutely together. While the position is grave, at least we know to-day where we stand. We have discovered by experience that elaborately built alliances are brittle things when put to the test, and we must learn to depend on ourselves. We have realised also that democracy can survive only as a result of constant preparation for defence. I endorse a great many of the remarks of the member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Tonkin) along those lines. It is expensive and dangerous to wait for an attack before preparing for defence. It is obvious, as the member for West Perth pointed out, that Australia will not be in a safe position until it obtains a larger population. At the same time when immigration is resumed we should be careful to ensure that we have only the right type of people. Personally, I would keep out al-

together certain types of Europeans who, if not openly against us, are at least not a source of strength in time of trouble.

On motion by Mr. Hill, debate adjourned.

STANDING ORDERS.

Report of Committee.

Mr. Marshall (Murchison) brought up the report of the Standing Orders Committee.

Ordered: That the report be printed and its consideration made an Order of the Day for the next sitting.

House adjourned at 5.47 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 6th August, 1940

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

QUESTION—WOOROLOO FARM CLEARING.

Hon. G. B. WOOD asked the Chief Secretary: What is the average cost per acre, to date, of the clearing being carried out for the Government at Wooroloo?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: Four hundred and thirty-three (433) acres have been cleared at Wooroloo Farm at a cost of £18,106, or £41 16s. 4d. per acre. It is heavy jarrah and redgum country, and the work has been carried out by men who are medically classified as "C" class, unable through their physical disabilities to do ordinary relief work, such as road construction, railway work, etc.

QUESTION—SUPERPHOSPHATE, ETC.

Stocks and Imports.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE asked the Chief Secretary: 1, What quantity of phosphatic rock was held in this State on the 1st September, 1939? 2, What quantity of manu-