

and producers of wealth are today nothing more than skeletons of their former selves. One wonders whether those mines will ever be capable of returning to production. They will certainly not be capable of resuming production immediately after the war. In the circumstances, I wonder whether mining will play the important part expected of it in the re-employment of our men. Unless some more determined effort is made to save the industry and preserve gold-mining, I am afraid it will not play the part we hope it will. I do not know whether the Mines Department is building up any records of the plant that has been moved from gold-producing mines, great and small, but I submit as a suggestion to the Government that unless steps are taken to provide for helping mine-owners either to repossess or replace this plant, the mining industry will not be the help we hope in the period immediately after the war.

Education is referred to in the Speech. It is pleasing to note the announcement of the Government's intention to initiate legislation to raise the school leaving age from 14 to 15 years, but the proviso to the paragraph making the extension apply "at a convenient time" is much too loose to please either members of this House or the general public. Indeed, I think it would be the consensus of opinion of the public generally that the school leaving age be raised to 16 instead of 15 years. However, an increase of one year will be a step in the right direction, and I am satisfied that legislation to this effect will meet with the approval of both Houses. I feel sure that both Parliament and the public will resent any delay. Money is found for other purposes and money must be found for education. Our system of education has very definitely lagged behind the systems of other States and other countries.

The Chief Secretary: Not at all.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I believe that any educationist would agree with my statement. However, I believe it to be true. In my opinion, the Government would be ill-advised to be indefinite about the date for introducing this reform. No matter how difficult it may be, let us make this session the "convenient time" for raising the school leaving age.

Hon. G. B. Wood: You cannot raise it in the twinkling of an eye. Extra buildings will be required.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Cannot we make provision this session and not defer it till a convenient time? Members know that convenient times seldom come. There is always something cropping up to permit of the excuse that the time is not convenient.

Hon. G. B. Wood: But we must have buildings and provision of that sort.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: A decision should be made immediately and not deferred till a convenient time. The children of today are going to be faced with a much harder life than any of us experienced, and unless we equip them adequately for the battle of life, we shall definitely fail in our duty to them. I have pleasure in supporting the motion.

On motion by Hon. L. B. Bolton, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2.15 p.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 3.24 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 11th August, 1943.

	PAGE
Questions : Swan View tunnel, as to report on mishap	40
Phosphate supplies, as to local deposits	41
Tramway Department bus services—(a) as to	
Canning Highway stops, (b) as to receiving a	
deputation	41
Address-in-reply, third day	41
Committees for the Session, Council's message	68
Bill : Supply (No. 1), £2,500,000, returned	68

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

QUESTIONS (4).

SWAN VIEW TUNNEL.

As to Report on Mishap.

Mr. TRIAT asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is he aware that the report of Ventilation Inspector Lloyd on the Swan View tunnel cannot be completed until the Railway Department makes available to Mr. Lloyd, the results of gas tests taken in the inquiry by the inspector? 2, Is he aware

that Mr. Lloyd asked for these results in April of this year, but has not received them up to date? 3, Does he intend to have these results made available to Inspector Lloyd? 4, Can the report be completed and tabled in this Chamber no later than next month?

The MINISTER replied: 1, No. 2, No. 3, The tests were made by the Government Mineralogist and Analyst who would no doubt make a copy available to Inspector Lloyd if requested. 4, Mr. Lloyd's report was submitted to the Mines Department.

PHOSPHATE SUPPLIES.

As to Local Deposits.

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Have investigations revealed a supply of phosphatic rock or other fertiliser on any islands adjacent to this State? 2, If so, are there any difficulties surrounding the transport of such fertiliser to this State, and what are they? 3, Is the most suitable class of shipping, for transporting the fertiliser in the minimum of time, available, and is it being used, and if not, what shipping difficulties prevent this being done? 4, In view of the very urgent demand for additional supplies of fertiliser for use in this State, will the Government take steps to have as much of it as possible available to farmers during the coming autumn?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST (for the Minister for Agriculture) replied: 1, Yes. 2, The islands are part of the State and in close proximity to the mainland. Suitable small transport vessels will be required. 3, The British Phosphate Commission is opening up the deposit and anticipates having the vessels available when production commences. 4, Appropriate action has already been taken.

TRAMWAY DEPARTMENT BUS SERVICES.

(A) As to Canning Highway Stops.

Mr. CROSS asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is he aware that, without any previous notice, the Government Tramway Department issued instructions to the effect that, immediately, all buses travelling along Canning Highway, both to and from the city will not stop, either to pick up or drop passengers between Way-road and Dyson-street? 2, If so, what is the reason for this drastic action? 3, Do similar conditions apply to the Metro bus service? 4, If so, does

he consider it reasonable to expect patrons of either bus service to walk to either Dyson-street or Way-road? 5, If these instructions have been issued, what action does he propose to take to remedy this unsatisfactory position?

The MINISTER replied: 1, Yes. 2, The Police Traffic Department notified the General Manager, Trams, etc., that instructions had been issued to prosecute drivers for stopping at Banksia-terrace, which is on top of the hill adjacent to the Hurlingham Hotel, in contravention of Traffic Regulation 80B (1). In consequence of this notification there was no alternative but to discontinue the stopping place at Banksia-terrace. 3, Presumably the traffic regulation which prohibits Tramway buses from stopping at Banksia-terrace would apply to all buses, but I have no definite information on the point. 4, No. 5, The Government buses come under Police Traffic regulations and must comply with same.

(B) As to Receiving a Deputation.

Mr. CROSS (without notice) asked the Minister for Railways: Is he aware that because of the present position grave dissatisfaction exists in South Perth today, and will he agree to receive a deputation to-morrow morning to hear the views of the people concerned?

The MINISTER replied: I am willing to receive a deputation at 10.30 a.m. to-morrow.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Third Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [2.26]: I desire to follow the Leader of the Opposition and congratulate the Premier on his birthday. I think that he, like the late Joseph Chamberlain, is one of those persons who maintains his health, good looks and physique without exercise. That is rather striking in these days because so many people advocate physical jerks. I remember going to the London zoo some years ago and seeing a tortoise 300 years old. I could not imagine physical jerks for a tortoise. At the present time, however, there is a tremendous urge to suggest that longevity is due to exercise. I doubt if that is correct. A test was once made by some scientists with the homely mice. Certain of them were put in a cage with wheels on which they could run freely. and others of the same type were placed in

an ordinary cage. It was found that those with the choice of running on the wheels lived only half as long as the ones which could merely loll in the cage and take things easily. So, perhaps, the Premier is right in not doing these physical jerks which are now so fashionable.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I wish to bring you into the picture, but I have to do so through the churches. I hope you will not object to that. I notice that in the last few years the churches are coming back into the political arena and advocating economic reform. So far as that is concerned I welcome the change. After all, in the middle ages the church was largely connected and concerned with the livelihood of the people and it enabled a suitable standard of living to be maintained, which has not existed since. I think that when the church abandoned its position during the industrial era it was a great mistake, and now when it comes forward to advocate specific reforms we, who have some experience of the problems concerned, are entitled to discuss with them the value of their particular reforms. That is where I think you, Sir, set a better example of reform because every day we meet here you read to us the Lord's Prayer, which itself, I think, describes the sort of world we desire to live in far better than do any of the proposals by the churches. You, Mr. Speaker, will become historic for this. You, with other gentlemen holding similar positions all over the world, will have seen the Lord's Prayer fulfilled in regard to two of its most important provisions.

We have only to take the paragraph reading, "Give us this day our daily bread," and then turn to the conference held at Hot Springs recently where 42 nations and over 80 per cent. of the people of the world were represented. The conference decided that man in future should be not only well fed but also so well fed that he would live 10 years longer and have 10 years more of virility. So I say you will go down in history because of your reading the Lord's Prayer here each day and of your seeing that prayer being fulfilled along the lines of the saying that Heaven helps those that help themselves. The nations had in the past not tried to help themselves; they had merely looked on while misery and poverty prevailed. The other paragraph that you read each day, Mr. Speaker, and is being fulfilled before our eyes is that which says, "Forgive us our

debts as we forgive our debtors." I have only to refer to the lend-lease arrangement between the Allies to show that that identical function is being fulfilled before our eyes. I could dwell upon this theme much further, but I do not wish to bring you too prominently into the picture, Mr. Speaker, because doubtless you hold your own views on these matters.

Let me turn to the main points of my address. First of all let me suggest that it would be advantageous if the "Hansard" reports of speeches were printed with sub-headings. For many years the "Hansard" has not been as satisfactory as it might have been because the speeches were not given sub-headings, and it is thus difficult for electors to follow the points as they could if the speeches were set out in short paragraphs with appropriate headlines. The headline of my remarks today is "Galileo or Nothing" and the sub-title "Is not this ridiculous?" In a recent article in the "Broadcaster," the local weekly for wireless readers which has the field to itself since the A.B.C. publication went off the market owing to a shortage of newsprint, a writer on behalf of the Army Education Service said—

Galileo was a doubter—all great men are doubters—not content to accept statements that are unproven, unafraid to fight prejudice. I suppose Galileo's career is a typical example of the difficult path any original mind has to travel. Naturally, you are in sympathy with him—now. The old professors should have tested the theories they taught, and so on, but would you have been in sympathy with Galileo if you had lived in his time?

Are you on the side of the Galileos of today; the men who are battering at the things you hold dear; the men who have the impudence to suggest your way of life is not the best way to live? Those who suggest our education system is out of date—that medical services should be the care of the State—in fact, anything that conflicts with age-old practice.

We're perfectly willing to sneer at those who laughed at Columbus, at Pasteur and the Wright brothers. The stupidity is obvious now, but it was not obvious then. What will posterity have to say about you? Are you opposed to some reform just because you don't understand it, because it interferes with your own way of life—or because you just haven't bothered to think about it?

It might be an idea if we set up a mental Leaning Tower of Pisa and tested out a few of our pet prejudices. You would not, I suppose, throw a man into prison for suggesting the earth revolved around the sun, nor would you burn a girl at the stake because she was a witch—but you might agree with torturing a man because he was mentally abnormal. You

may feel perfectly righteous about refusing a man the right to work because his politics didn't agree with yours.

There are other methods of torture besides the stake, the rack and the dungeon, and they are employed today by some very charming people. I believe the gentlemen who sent Joan of Arc to the stake were awfully nice people. The judgment of 1992 might be harsh on some of the best people of 1943.

Mr. J. Hegney: Did you hear the speech by the Leader of the Opposition yesterday?

Mr. NORTH: Those remarks were written on behalf of the Army Education Service. Our men will be returning from the war soon, and we shall have to be ready with proposals. I think we might well answer the remarks in that statement through the records of this House. On looking around the Chamber, I cannot find that members are loth to change anything. I could apply that statement to any member of this Chamber. Take the member for Nedlands. We know he is a revolutionary. We remember that some years ago, when speaking of economic reforms, he said—"The brain of man, let alone the hand of man, is now being superseded by machines and unless the world pays attention to this fact, there will be a revolution." Then take the Minister for Labour: Fancy his coming here and daring to tell us that he had started aluminium works, or a steel industry in this State! Is not that revolutionary in this wheat and fruit country? The writer of the article certainly put up a very good case in a general way, but it was a very poor case as applied to this House. I could go all round this Chamber and show how revolutionary members are. On one occasion the member for West Perth advocated the Henry George scheme of reform. The member for Murray-Wellington has seen his revolutionary ideas regarding water put into operation, thereby opening up beautiful country and turning it into something that nature probably never intended.

The Minister for Labour: Would you mind spending some time on the member for Swan?

Mr. NORTH: I am afraid the member for Swan is so revolutionary that in some countries he would suffer the fate of being shot. Even my own district of Claremont is revolutionary. I could not relate half the tales that have been poured into my ears by interested electors of Claremont. In 1930-33, when the depression was with us, electors of my district urged the appoint-

ment of a Royal Commission on a very revolutionary proposal, namely, that goods should be sold at less than the cost price. They challenged the idea that during a time of depression there should be deflation and that during boom periods there should be inflation. The adoption of that proposal would certainly have been an innovation. At the time it was considered to be ridiculous; in fact the House considered it so ridiculous that it was not even discussed. Then came an election and the people of Claremont persisted in their revolutionary proposal. They wanted another motion to be moved in the House, and on this occasion the Government of the day assented to hear the motion, which was added to by the member for North-East Fremantle. It probably received a great deal of assistance from members who were interested in the subject of the equalisation of wealth.

Let us see how the years have dealt with that revolutionary proposal. The equalisation of wealth which was sought by the member for North-East Fremantle has been exemplified in taxation up to 19s. in the pound. He has had his recommendations looked into, because that is the position today in that regard. As to the proposal to sell below cost and the attempt made by the people of Claremont to have it investigated, a Royal Commission was appointed by the Lyons Government in due course, but that Government turned the proposal down on the ground that it considered it to be fallacious and inflationary. Yet, in the stress of a great war, we have the spectacle of the present Commonwealth Government fixing a selling price for all the important commodities and paying a subsidy to maintain those prices. We find that in Great Britain the prices of staple commodities have been fixed at figures only a little above the pre-war level, with only a one per cent. lag after two years during the greatest war in history. The cost there has been £200,000,000 a year for the Treasury to maintain those low prices. Therefore, I think it can be said about this stimulating article on Galileo that not only members of Parliament but also electors will go so far as making revolutionary proposals and sticking to them.

In spite of the ridicule which was poured on these proposals, we find that after the passage of years and after the outbreak of the present titanic war, the proposals have actually been put into effect, notwithstanding

that one of them was turned down by a Royal Commission as being fallacious. If the people are right in their judgment—which, of course, I cannot say, as I am only their spokesman—then the proposal to sell below cost, with the appropriate subsidy, is the key solution to the future both for our farming industry and everything else, because it will enable production and distribution to be increased to 100 per cent. limit. This it could never have done under the old orthodox system, which is now apparently passing away. Under that system costs were passed on as they occurred and consumption and distribution fell. I have said that this is ridiculous. I also think it ridiculous that these proposals, the acceptance of which is so urgently needed and which is being used by various Governments, should be mixed up with an election. Unfortunately, as I go round my district people say to me, "Ha, ha! The Commonwealth Government has reduced the price of tea. The Commonwealth Government will not put that one over me. The price will go up after the election. Why has it been kept high for so long? There is a catch in it somewhere." In other words, this scientific proposal is just as important as are health and education, and I am amazed that it should be mixed up with an election.

Mr. Fox: Did you explain that to the electors?

Mr. NORTH: We had meetings about this proposal at Claremont. The proposal was put to me and I had to refer it to my friend the member for Subiaco to see what was wrong with it. It is 10 years now since the proposal to sell below cost was first mooted and now these people in Claremont have their toes up. They deserve a permanent tablet to record their efforts.

Several members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Members must maintain order.

Mr. NORTH: The member for Subiaco supports my view of the proposals. Leaving that point, which, as I have said, is important, I think the electors should be in touch with members of Parliament and so feel that they are making a useful contribution to the affairs of State. Let me now proceed to my second point. It falls under the same heading and it is the question of this Chamber and the political outlook generally. During the recess a post-war reconstruction meeting was held in Perth and I was invited to address it upon a subject which

was considered to be non-controversial. The subject was this Chamber. It was non-controversial to the people who attended the meeting and who went there with various reforms in their mind. It was considered that an address on the subject of this Chamber and politics in general would be quite innocuous. Alas! I had deceived the audience and shocked them. The subject was the overhauling of politics. I feel there are many important matters which could be dealt with in this Chamber for the benefit of politics generally and for the people of Western Australia in particular.

On that subject, I think we all agree that there is great need for us to revive the interest of the people generally in public life. For some years past we have noticed how that interest has been lacking. There has been a paucity of attendances at meetings and an almost utter lack of interest in elections. I listened recently to an address over Station 6KY, which I understand was a present from the National Government to the Labour Party—a noble gesture it was, too. I believe Mr. Menzies authorised this station for Mr. Curtin. I wish our Party also could possess a station. I listened in with the object of getting some uplift and having my political views improved or added to. The conversation was a most interesting one. There were two debaters, one of whom I think was the member for North-East Fremantle. I am sorry he is not present in the Chamber now. The discussion was on these lines: That the people ought to take more interest in public affairs and should come back to public life. I agree with every word of that. The drift is disgraceful; it is shocking.

That is why I made my remarks about overhauling politics. I did so in good faith, with the object of seeing whether something could not be done to improve the control of the authorities by the people and stimulate the interest of the people in their governmental institutions. My first point is as regards voting. I am dead against manual voting; I am 100 per cent. for mechanical voting. This obtains in the United States, and so there are no dirty remarks and no innuendoes when the people vote. Nobody tells the electors what they think of Mr. Hawke or of Mr. North or of anybody else. It is completely automatic, cut and dried, and there are no disputes about the counting. I was talking to-day on this subject

with an American naval officer and he confirmed my knowledge of it. He said, "Yes, it is quite true. The machinery is there and a mistake cannot be made. The people must vote for one or other of the candidates or for them all if there are more than two." Let us adopt this system and cut out the manual voting.

Mr. Watts: Would you cut out preferential voting?

Mr. NORTH: No, but a machine cannot lie. The next point is, should people be compelled to vote?

Mr. Watts: No.

Mr. NORTH: Is it right? The people are driven like cattle to vote in order to avoid a fine of £2. There are literally thousands who have not the slightest interest in voting. They say things that cannot be repeated. Those who have acted as scrutineers well know this and have sometimes been shocked. Surely we can decide to allow those people to rule who wish to rule. If elections were held on a voluntary basis, people would begin to feel they had missed something and would quickly exercise their privilege. In the meantime we have an impossible position. There is no compulsory voting for the House of Commons. The people in Great Britain are content to allow 30 per cent. of the electors to decide the matter. If the other 70 per cent. are so indifferent as not to wish to vote, let them keep out. People who do not vote should not be brought before the Police Court and charged with an offence, but there could be an extra charge imposed in their income tax assessment, if they do not want to vote, to cover the cost of registration, etc. I think that under such conditions we would soon find that most people would take more interest in public affairs. Another question is whether people should be allowed to vote without knowing what it is all about.

The present situation is a scandal. Should people not have to know something about the candidates for Parliament and what the issues are? I have heard it said in connection with the forthcoming Federal election, "Where is Charlie North? He is not on the list this time." Probably the same is being said by many electors concerning other members of this House. Many people do not know the difference between State and Federal elections and there is room for vital reform. Now I come to the candidates for election. Is it fair to ask people to come into

political life as a bolt from the blue? Should not there be some standard for Parliamentary candidates? In the address I gave at the meeting to which I have referred I suggested that candidates should be required to have had a term of three years with a local authority. That was not meant to be an exclusive or conclusive recommendation but was only a suggestion. I know that all the members of this Chamber have a tremendous knowledge of public affairs. People outside do not realise how much has to be studied. Nobody should be allowed to stand for Parliament in the first instance who has not prepared himself for the work.

I am sure all members will agree that those seeking election should qualify to a certain standard before taking a seat in this House. Magistrates, judges and various public officials are required to have some qualification, and if those seeking election to Parliament had to be qualified we would gain all round. Further, I would urge that nobody should be thrown out of public life once he had been elected, any more than a magistrate or a judge. I do not suggest that a man should continue to receive a member's salary, but when a man's services have been used for many years, perhaps first on a local governing body and then in this Chamber, he should not be thrown out because, after ten or 15 years or even less, he might fight some big issue and refuse to be dictated to. A politician has to be something of a trapeze artist. He has to be able to sit on the fence, on the one hand and keep his ear to the ground on the other. That is very difficult and when a man, after many years' service in this Chamber, decides that he will get off the fence, come out in the open and speak like a man, out he goes into the gutter or the wilderness!

A man who has given his whole time to public affairs tends to become a rabbit in the business, and I do not say that in a deprecating fashion. Of course, many members do not give their full time to the work. They are unable to do so because of the pernicious political system under which we live. I am certain they would devote their whole time to the work if, like magistrates or judges, they were chosen for the position and knew that if they were thrown out of politics they would be available for certain public duties, which there is not time to name but which could be named and which would be far better done by ex-members of Parliament who do not desire to forsake poli-

tics. They should not have to look forward to doing some ill-paid political hack job and being sneered at for the rest of their lives. That is a vile end for one who has given decent service for a large part of his life to public affairs. I would speak now of the value of Independents. I belong to a party and I think that Parliament must be run on the party system; otherwise it would be entirely unworkable. Nevertheless, I believe that two or three Independents are of great assistance to this Chamber. They bring us different viewpoints. They might often worry the parties, but they are very useful as an ornament or addition to the party system.

Mr. J. Hegney: They are useful, even if they are only sounding your death-knell.

Mr. NORTH: I would not deny that. The point is whether they or any members of the Opposition or any private members have a chance of getting anything done in this House when they submit something that is reasonable, with the full backing of thousands of people in this community. I think not, and I believe there is room for a change in the Standing Orders. I know that the Clerk of the Assembly, Mr. Steere, sees great difficulty in the way of any such change, but I submit that it is very important that a change should be made. As the Leader of the Opposition said, it is vital that when a resolution is carried by the House it should be put into effect. Of course, no Premier in the past has ever given effect to such resolutions because the Standing Orders do not provide for such a course being taken. I do not deny that if the present Premier were on this side of the House and the Leader of the Opposition or the member for West Perth were in charge on the other side of the House, without a change of the Standing Orders nothing could be done on those lines. I am aiming throughout my remarks to revive the interest of the people in their Parliament.

Thousands of people want something done, and approach their Parliamentary representative. Sometimes it is a member of a party and sometimes an Independent. A motion is carried but nothing further eventuates, and that causes great dissatisfaction. When that happens a few times, the people lose interest in public life and make remarks implying what is utterly untrue, namely that members here engage in

wire-pulling or are gagged. That is quite untrue, so far as I am concerned. It is merely the fault of the Standing Orders. The famous Henry Plimsoll is my ideal example of a private member who did a big job for the world. After many fights he was responsible for having introduced a law for the provision of a line around ships to guard against overloading and consequent sinking in storms. He persuaded the Government to introduce a measure on those lines but the big shots of the time got behind the Government and had the Bill withdrawn. It took Plimsoll years and the expenditure of thousands of pounds to have the system changed and the Plimsoll line introduced. The same difficulty confronts private members in these times, a hundred years afterwards. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned several resolutions that have been carried here and have been given no consideration.

On behalf of the people of Claremont I have submitted motions concerning railway gauges but nothing has been done. It might be said that the State Government has not the power to do anything. Very often Governments will do the things they have to do and will neglect the things they do not have to do. I strongly urge, as a member of the Standing Orders Committee, that the House agree to this matter being looked into with a view to some reform being effected that will benefit not only the Opposition but all sections of the House. Resolutions are carried at the instance of private members but are never given effect to through lack of a requisite standing order. In regard to the Federal and State elections, there are two problems that appear to me to be very vital to all of us. They have not been settled or even brought forward. I contend that the social security schemes that have been propounded do not constitute a sufficient answer to the first of these problems with which I will proceed to deal. At present when a mine or a factory has installed in it modern machinery there is a danger of even the best skilled workmen being sacked. The Arbitration Court does not provide for that eventuality. This sort of thing has occurred in Collie, in New South Wales and probably all over the world.

When an enterprising owner wants to mechanise his industry, the workers say, "We are on wages and if this concern

is mechanised half of us will be out of work. Where shall we go?" There may be relief in a problematical social security scheme. Failing that, and unless they can get another job, there is the dole to look forward to. That is not the way to run an industrial country. I urge that the solution of the problem is to make quite sure that when mechanisation is introduced those who are threatened with displacement are displaced with no loss of income until they are put into equally valuable positions somewhere else where skill is required. I have not seen that issue brought forward on any programme. I want to see it mentioned during this election and during the State elections next year. There is another side to the problem. An employer is loth to spend money to mechanise his business unless he can see, as a result, a very valuable improvement in his financial position, which is not always possible except by drastic dismissals. Why should the Arbitration Court not have power to order the mechanisation of industry wherever it is lacking and to guarantee low charges in interest on the cost? We shall never attain to better conditions by sticking to old processes.

The other big question which has never been brought forward, or at any rate only in a wrong way, is that of socialism. It is quite ridiculous to argue that one person is a socialist and the other a non-socialist. All that can be argued is that some people say some things should be run by the State and others by private enterprise, while other people say that everything should be run by the State. At any rate, that is how the matter is posed. My opinion is that there should be a policy on the part of the authorities tending to the improvement of our existing public concerns. We have quite enough to do now with the existing public utilities if we are to have the best results, without embarking on any new concern. Take our railways! I am very well aware that we have the most difficult railway system in the world in the sense that we have the greatest proportional mileage of any country and the fewest people to pay for it. We started from scratch under tremendous difficulties, but I think there is an opportunity for us to seek the means of improving the system. Can we improve the financial side?

The Commonwealth Government ought to say to the State Railway Department, "We

know you are overburdened with a terrific capital cost incurred years ago on which you are paying four per cent. To compare your railways with those in Britain is not fair because you have to find four per cent. before you can make any profit, whereas if the British railways make $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. they show a profit right off." Viewing the matter from that angle, the next Commonwealth Government should undertake the liquidation of the indebtedness of the railway system, in easy stages, under any financial method it might care to adopt. I do not pose as a doctrinaire on that point. In effect, some authority should be able to say to the Railway Department, "From now on we shall be your financier or mortgagee." That would give the State Government—if the railway systems are still to be retained by the States in the future—an opportunity to effect the improvements and renovations that are so necessary. That authority could say to the Minister for Railways, "We know what you have to pay by way of interest and we know that from that you get no benefit. We will gradually pay those debts to the bondholders, and there will be no question of repudiation. By the means we suggest you will be able to start anew and effect improvements that are now beyond your capacity."

The Premier: The Commonwealth authorities are really doing that now by means of their contributions.

Mr. NORTH: I know there has been a large reduction in our oversea debt since the slump of years ago.

The Premier: The Commonwealth is contributing one-third of our sinking fund contributions, the effect of which will be to wipe out the indebtedness in the course of years.

Mr. NORTH: Despite the Premier's successful presentation of the remedy for living long and keeping young, I would remind him that 58 years is a long time. I think there is room for improvement even from that standpoint. Up to the present Australia has spent over £1,000,000,000 on the war and, that being so, it should not be very hard for the Commonwealth to take over the railway indebtedness in big slices and make the necessary payments so that the department will have an opportunity to rehabilitate the system, enabling it to compete with the different forms of transport operating so successfully in other directions. I ask members to compare the transport services provided

by airway, steamship and motorbus concerns with that of our railways. I would also include the trolley-buses with the airways and the other concerns because they, like the others, have been modernised. Then again, if a bus deteriorates and is worn out, private enterprise puts a new bus on the run. Compare that position with our railway rolling-stock. I understand some of the engines now running are 50 or 60 years old. When something goes wrong, the engines are patched up and kept in traffic. The reason for that is not that our railway workers are not as good as, or are not superior even to, other similar types of workers. Rather is the explanation to be found in the fact that the existing system is not fair to the railways.

At the next election we should demand from all parties a concrete policy of improvement of our Commonwealth and State enterprises. Take the question of the electricity supply. It is futile to sit back with regard to that department and at the same time expect it to give the best possible service in the world, seeing that it is not operating in accordance with the latest improved methods. What is achieved is excellent and equal to the world's best with the type of plant available. The fact remains that our electricity department was established with a slight handicap because, to a certain extent, it was under the influence of a municipal body, which meant it could not work freely. I have been told it was a cheap plant, brought originally from a foreign country, that operated on wrong cycles. Nevertheless, it has done very well and has rendered fine service to the State. On the other hand, if members were to go to Yallourn or to some other centre where modern methods are employed, they would appreciate the fact that nowadays the recognised practice is to take the current from the pit's head.

The people of Claremont have been trying, through their mouthpiece in Parliament, to get something done. They tried it 20 years ago when a case was submitted to Parliament. The department was urged to lay down a line conveying the current across country from Collie to Perth. It was pointed out that under such a system, not only would the requirements of Perth be supplied, but all the centres in the South-West would also draw upon the current. That proposal was turned down. A body was set up to make investigations and the question was asked, "When will the people be able to use sufficient cur-

rent to justify a transmission line from the South-West?" The answer came, "When we reach a consumption of 50,000,000 units." That consumption was reached years ago, and it is now nearer 100,000,000 units.

The Premier: It is now more than that.

Mr. NORTH: Then the answer came from the experts a second time. When the matter was referred to again, the experts pointed out that we had a very good plant and the State could afford to keep going as at present. If the Electricity Supply Department is to have a real chance of expansion in the future, it should enjoy the same opportunities for improvement as those secured by private enterprise. If private enterprise could see that additional wire was required, that wire would be obtained. I read with interest the statement published by the Premier in the Press to the effect that he was on the point of expending £1,000,000 on the duplication of the present plant. If the Premier has the opportunity to secure good money from the Commonwealth Government for the purpose of duplicating the present plant, there should be a chance to erect the necessary lines and convey current from Collie direct to the city.

The Premier: It is said that the transmission costs would be equal to the freight on coal over the railways.

Mr. NORTH: I would not dream of arguing with men who should know their business. I think the natural thing to do would be to call in an expert from Yallourn or some other centre and seek further advice. I know it is rather an unpleasant course to adopt and that it does not always work out properly, but I think the people are entitled to have this matter investigated. If England and Victoria have the advantage of the group system, Western Australia, which we hope will carry a big population in future, must have a group system too. We know that Perth will grow and the country centres will also expand, which will provide for extra calls upon the electricity supply. There are two concrete proposals that should be placed before the electors at the next opportunity.

We must have improved methods and the further mechanisation of industry will mean increased opportunities for the workers. I refer, of course, to the skilled men who should welcome it. I do not refer to the men who look for social security through

other avenues. Secondly, the employers should appreciate the position and be enabled to move with the times. The Commonwealth authorities should recognise that the State is not deriving benefit from the expenditure of money oversea in interest payments and they should see to it that State enterprises as a whole are put in a position to secure the best advice. There should be a concerted effort on the part of all parties, so-called "non-socialist" as well as socialist, to improve the position, and our State enterprises should not be kicked about and kept back as has been the experience so much in the past. I trust we shall have a satisfactory session and I look forward to hearing from the Government, and from the member for Maylands as well, something about the housing question which has become so vital at the present moment.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly): I would not like to break the continuity of the congratulations extended to the Premier by the Leader of the Opposition, particularly seeing that the member for Claremont has followed the member for Katanning in that respect. At the same time, if every speaker follows suit it will be difficult for the Premier to determine at the end of the protracted debate upon what anniversary we are congratulating him. However, I do endorse the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition about the Premier and also about absent members. The Speech with which His Excellency was pleased to open this Parliament does not provide much about which to enthuse.

The Minister for Mines: Do not say that!

Mr. SEWARD: It contains some mention of secondary industries that may be established, and with those comments we can cordially agree. Unfortunately, the Speech disclosed some serious omissions to which I shall refer.

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: It would have been much longer otherwise.

Mr. SEWARD: The Speech was not so lengthy as usual and certainly did not contain that reiteration of the State's progress during the previous twelve months which is so unnecessary. Later on in the session we shall have an opportunity fully to review the financial position and will then be able to ascertain just how we stand. When releasing the details for the last financial year for publication in "The West Australian" of the

3rd July last, the Premier compared the result achieved for that year with that of the third year of the 1914-18 war. The period 1911-16 happened to be the time when the Scaddan Labour Government was in office, while the remainder of the period, from 1916 to 1918, was when the Wilson and Lefroy Governments were in power. Consequently, to all intents and purposes, the responsibility for the deficit of £706,000 was a legacy left to the State by the Scaddan Administration. I think it was during that period that a certain slogan gained currency—"Gone a Million Jack." Proof is to be obtained from a perusal of the records of that period to show that during the period mentioned, a total deficit of £2,454,950 was accumulated practically over the seven years ended 1918. The yearly results were as follows:

Year ended.	Deficit.
1914	£135,411
1915	565,816
1916	348,223
1917	699,757
1918	705,743
	<hr/>
	£2,454,950

The Minister for Mines: It was reckoned at the time that the people had the money in their pockets.

Mr. SEWARD: It should be noted that as the years passed the deficit increased from £135,000 to £705,000. I also point out to the Premier that when the Scaddan Government took office there had been surpluses for two years, one of which totalled £209,939 and the other £115,991. So that one might feel justified in saying that had that Government not come into power in 1911, the Premier on this occasion, instead of being able to show a record of three consecutive surpluses, would have had to report that he had merely equalled the existing record. When the Premier drew a comparison between those two particular periods, the revenue available for the earlier Administration was not in any way comparable to the revenue available to the Government last year. During the years 1915 to 1918 the revenue per head of the population came to £16 in 1915 and to £17 in 1916, and then fell to £14 in 1917 and 1918. Therefore, besides there being a smaller revenue, comparatively speaking, per head of population, the revenue was decreasing as the years advanced.

Exactly the opposite has been the case in the last four years; revenue has been increasing each year. In 1939 it had been £23.7 per head of population as against £16 in 1915. In 1940 and 1941 the respective figures were £23.9 and £24.4, as against, in 1916, £17 and £14 in 1917. In 1942 the figure was £25.4, as against £14 in 1918. So that the present Government had a vastly different set of financial circumstances to handle. In 1918 the population of Western Australia was 315,794, whereas according to the latest figures it had increased to 470,241. In other words, the Government of 1918 had a total revenue of £4,622,536 from a population of 315,794; and it finished the year with a deficit of £705,743. Last year, as against a revenue of £4,622,536 in 1918, the State Government received £13,151,078, and the population was only 154,000 greater. And yet, with that highly favourable set of circumstances, the Government was only able to finish up the year with a surplus of £24,436. So that I do not think much comfort is to be derived from our finances of last year. The position would have been different if the population had doubled like the revenue doubled, but the population in the interval between the two periods had increased by only 155,000.

The Minister for Mines: The basic wage had gone up.

Mr. SEWARD: Taking a review of the finances, the Premier states that "his surplus is due (in part) to inability to carry out the usual scale of maintenance of Government assets." And again he says, "No expenditure has been approved for an object which could be set aside." I have no hesitation whatever in saying that had the Government provided for the usual maintenance of its assets, then instead of having a surplus it would have had a very substantial deficit to report to taxpayers. Thus it is rather difficult to see whence the member for Perth derives his satisfaction, as expressed last Thursday, from a perusal of the financial results of last year. It is true that the Premier, in releasing the figures, stated that the Government had deemed it advisable to reserve some amount for a contribution towards what would have been the normal amount of expenditure on maintenance; but the hon. gentleman gave no indication of what amount had been reserved. It may have been hundreds of thousands of pounds, or only a few pound-notes

may have been set aside. That was a regrettable omission from the Premier's statement. He ought to have indicated exactly what amount had been set aside, so that we could have seen what effect that had on his being able to close the year with a surplus. Of course any Government can end up the financial year with a surplus. That is quite an easy matter—if the Government chooses simply to pay unescapable amounts. Therefore I do not see that any great genius is displayed in simply being able to say, "We have a surplus." When one compares the announced financial results of the years in Western Australia with the corresponding results in other States, one is inclined to ask oneself, "What is the matter with Western Australian finances?" South Australia finished the last year with a surplus of £233,000, while New South Wales had a credit balance of £1,112,871. The Premier of New South Wales said—

It is satisfactory that although the State's business undertakings were almost wholly responsible for the result, consolidated revenue fund operations for the year had shown a surplus of £88,418.

When, however, we pass to Queensland we find that that State had a surplus of £102,222. Actually, however, the State's revenue exceeded its expenditure by a little more than £5,000,000. Railway receipts were responsible for Queensland's all-time record of excess revenue over expenditure, said the Premier of that State. One may ask, what were our railways doing? One would naturally think that at this time, when a large amount of revenue was coming to the State from the military authorities, Western Australia would also be able to report some such results. When presenting the financial results the Premier contented himself with the remark that railway results were £98,000 better than the Estimates, and tramways £29,000, but that electricity results were £35,000 worse than the Estimates.

Since then the Minister for Railways has released the full figures in regard to operation of the railways, and we learn that railway revenue increased by no less than £421,595 for the year. Yet the loss on the year's working is only £1,056 less than the loss for the previous year. As regards the Tramways, this undertaking, despite an increase of £67,430 in earnings, shows a profit of £34,969, which is less than last year's

profit by £3,849. Ferries show an increase in revenue of £1,369 over last year's figures, but this year's results show a drop in profits from £1,035 to £174. Electricity, the last of the services under the control of the Minister for Railways, again shows an increased revenue of £22,254, and yet the year's results are a drop in profit from £22,484 to £10,485, a difference of £11,999. So that one can derive very little comfort from a perusal of the financial records of last year; and consequently I await, and I am sure other members await, with great interest the fuller explanation which the Premier will no doubt give us when he brings down his Budget.

Now I wish to pass to the National Works Council, of which body the Premier attended a meeting last year. The Premier has not said much in that regard, but he has had statements published in the Press, and from these I quote—

The most important matter discussed at the recent Premiers' Conference was the establishment of the National Works Council. Although for the present this body is to act purely as a planning authority without any executive power, its function is such that it will exercise a very important influence on the future development of Australia.

The Premier then went on to indicate how all the States were very busy preparing plans for post-war work. He went on to say that it was necessary to have a central body to which the various schemes could be submitted in order to prevent undesirable overlapping, duplication and competition. It might be well to emphasise those last words—

It was necessary to have a central body to which the various schemes could be submitted in order to prevent undesirable overlapping, duplication and competition.

To me they have rather an unpleasant sound. When Western Australia comes into competition with the Eastern States, past experience does not lead us to believe that this State will come out best. The Premier then went on to say—

It would be the task of the National Works Council to ensure that all these factors were given due weight in our planning, and that when the war finished, preparations would be advanced to such a stage that there would be a pool of works available from which suitable employment could immediately be found for men who were demobilised or released from munition establishments.

I regard those statements as very weighty, and as containing matter which we should

look at very carefully. Having got an indication of what the National Works Council has to do, and of what its composition is, I wish to draw the attention of members to the allocation of money at the last meeting of the Loan Council. This is the allocation—

	Semi-Govt.	Govt. Expenditure	Semi-Govt. (Local authorities included).	Total.	Surplus
	£	£	£	£	£
N.S.W.	250,000	3,507,537	1,051,000	4,808,537	1,112,371
Vic.	250,000	1,356,648	324,000	1,931,548	....
Queensland ....	....	1,719,000	292,000	2,011,000	5,350,000
S.A. ....	....	2,518,576	10,000	2,528,576	283,000
W.A. ....	....	749,732	10,000	759,732	24,436
Tasmania ....	....	1,121,775	90,000	1,211,775	....
				£13,251,168	

In regard to Tasmania and Victoria, I have not been able to ascertain what those States' financial results were in this year. The total money allocated by the Loan Council to all the States was £13,251,168, of which this State received £759,732.

Mr. Cross: Do you think we should have got more?

Mr. SEWARD: If the hon. member will keep quiet, I will tell him in the course of a few moments what I think. Continuing his review of the Loan Council meeting, the Premier stated that the allocation to this State of £749,732 was satisfactory and that—

“with the great demand for manpower and material for war purposes, it is neither practicable nor desirable to embark on a large policy of public works for the time being. For the time being we shall continue to concentrate on works which have a defence value or which are vitally necessary for civil purposes. Projects of less urgency or of a developmental nature must await the post-war period.”

Those statements of the Premier require considerable elaboration and explanation. No doubt he will, when introducing his Budget later on, give the House that explanation. With regard to the interjection by the member for Canning a moment ago, I have no intention of advising that we should embark on a large borrowing campaign, but there is another side to this question.

It must not be forgotten that Western Australia is largely in a developmental state compared with the more highly developed Eastern States. We may have many avenues of expenditure which, while they are civil ones, have a defence value. To mention one—extensive water schemes; another, the broad-gauge railway. When we

come to consider what are, comparatively speaking, the large amounts that have been handed out to the Eastern States, as I have just enumerated, by the Loan Council, we are impelled to ask on what all that money is to be expended. It may be expended in initiating certain works—for instance, water schemes or other schemes considered to be more urgent—which, when the war ends, and we all hope that it will finish within a reasonable time, say, in the next few years, will have to be carried through to completion. There are certain works of an extremely urgent nature—I mentioned two, water schemes and the broadening of the railway gauge—that can also be advantageously commenced in this State. They would definitely have a defence value, as well as a great civil value after the war. Does it follow that we, in refraining from obtaining this money, are acting in the best interests of Western Australia, when we consider that it is being made available to other States which are in a far better financial position than is this State? May we not be acting detrimentally to the future interests of the State?

I ask the Premier to give us as full a statement as possible as to the use to which the money granted to the other States is going to be put. I might mention that the grants made to Victoria and New South Wales include £250,000 each, which is to be applied for the purchase of land upon which to erect houses under a housing scheme. The member for Perth derived great consolation from the fact, when speaking on the Address-in-reply, that a housing scheme was contemplated for this State. I take it there is no necessity to purchase land for the purpose in this State. Of course, it may mean that there is no intention to embark on a housing scheme.

The Premier: Yes.

Mr. SEWARD: We will have to await the Premier's full explanation, which I hope he will give us in due course, as to whether this State, in refraining from securing extra amounts from the Loan Council, is not being prejudiced.

Another matter I do not like was the statement that the recent conference agreed in entirety to the recommendation of the Co-ordinator General of Public Works. We all know that this gentleman is highly qualified; but at the same time he is more accustomed, shall we say, to the Eastern States. He

is living there and probably his judgment may be influenced more in their favour than in ours. That is a point which will have to be carefully guarded against. Each State should be given a fair hearing when the Co-ordinator General of Public Works makes his recommendations to the Loan Council.

I wish to refer for a moment to something I would not have mentioned at all, because it really concerns the electorate of the member for Toodyay. At the same time, I look upon the Wooroloo Sanatorium as a State institution. I read with no small amount of shame a paragraph in "The West Australian" last week stating that it was proposed to institute a street appeal in order to obtain money to erect cottages at the sanatorium, so that those who had been cured of the dread disease treated there would be able to live in greater comfort with their families. Is not that a disgrace?

The Minister for Mines: The patients must live there while being cured.

Mr. SEWARD: That was not stated in the paper. I can only accept the statement as it appears in the paper. It was to the effect that the patients could live there after being cured and while they were still not capable of competing in the labour market owing to disabilities suffered from the disease.

The Minister for Mines: The Superintendent of the institution believes the patients would be much better off if living there with their families.

Mr. SEWARD: That does not make any difference to my point of view. Why should the Government have to depend upon street collections in order to treat these unfortunate people? I think the Government ought to be ashamed of itself.

Mr. Thorn: That is not so. Had you been following the progress of this matter, you would have noticed the various amounts of money donated by the Government to the institution. This is an extra appeal to try to get more funds to further the scheme.

Mr. SEWARD: That may be so, but in my opinion people afflicted with such illness should be a first charge on the Government.

The Minister for Mines: It is apparently a community enterprise.

Mr. SEWARD: It should not be necessary to have a street appeal. I disagree with it. In my opinion, this is a responsi-

bility which the Government should shoulder. Following on the remarks made by my Leader yesterday, I desire to call the attention of the Government to the fact that last session a motion was carried by this House that a Royal Commission should be appointed to investigate certain charges made last session by the then member for East Perth. No such Royal Commission has been appointed.

The Premier: No. You asked that the Chief Justice should be appointed. He said it was purely a political matter and refused to act.

Mr. SEWARD: It is true that I moved that the Chief Justice should be appointed as the Royal Commissioner; but, as the Premier also pointed out during the course of last session, the Chief Justice refused to accept the position. But that did not absolve the Government from appointing a Royal Commission.

The Premier: We asked the Commonwealth to make a judge available for the purpose, but were told that none was available.

Mr. SEWARD: That does not affect the position that a motion was carried by this House to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate the charges.

The Premier: The decision was that the Chief Justice was to be asked to investigate the matter as a Royal Commissioner; but the Chief Justice said, "It is a political matter and I am not going to be bothered with it."

Mr. SEWARD: That does not absolve the Government from the duty of appointing a Royal Commission, nor does it remove from the Government, or from the members concerned, the stigma which was cast upon them by those remarks and which still remains.

The Premier: Oh, yes!

Mr. SEWARD: It is the duty of the Government to take notice of motions carried by the House and to give effect to them. Even the members on the Government side supported the motion, thereby giving weight to the fact that they regarded it as justified. The inquiry should be held and the Government must accept the responsibility for not complying with the decision of the House.

The Premier: A person who makes allegations in Parliament can claim privilege. We had an instance of that during the last few weeks.

Mr. SEWARD: That is beside the question. Leaving that point, I desire to refer to that part of the Governor's Speech in which it is stated that preparations are to be made—and I am thoroughly in accord—for the extension of existing secondary industries and for the establishment of further secondary industries. While that may be all right, it sounds to me something like talking of painting the roof of the house but neglecting the foundations. By the foundations in this instance I refer to the primary industries, because without question those industries are the foundations of this State. I question very much whether the Government has a proper appreciation of the position of the primary industries in this State.

The Premier: We spend about £100,000 a year in the Agricultural Department.

Mr. SEWARD: Anybody can spend money. The point is to see that value is obtained.

The Premier: Do you say that the department is not run properly?

Mr. SEWARD: Not for one moment! The mere fact that we are spending money is not to say that we are spending it wisely. We may not spend it in the right direction. Going through Western Australia today one finds a very deplorable state of affairs in country towns. One very prominent country town in this State has no fewer than 20 shops closed. Large numbers of shops are standing vacant in country towns.

Mr. Cross: In the city, too!

Mr. SEWARD: Let the hon. member contain himself for a while. Unfortunately I cannot say all I want to say in one breath but in due course I will try to convey to the hon. member—though probably not quite as clearly as he would like—what I mean. I know full well that the war has contributed to a great extent to the existing position, but not wholly. There are other factors involved. One of the main factors is the progressively declining state of the agricultural industry in Western Australia. That has been going on for the past 12 years, and members on this side of the House have not been slow in pointing out that the decline is taking place and urging that remedial action should be employed. The Speech states—

A general stocktaking of land available for post-war settlement and the re-grouping of holdings in outer areas is in progress.

I hope the Government does not imagine that any post-war settlement—and I particularly refer to soldier settlement—is going to take place in the outer areas. If so, I think the Government will require to have another think, as the popular saying goes.

The Premier: There is not too much land in the inner areas.

Mr. SEWARD: Is there not? Let the Premier make no mistake about that. Apart from that, it is very doubtful indeed whether many of our returned soldiers will take up land anywhere, even in the most favourable places, unless the conditions governing agriculture are amended. Many men who enlisted from the country districts were influenced in their decision in no small way by the desire to get away from the drudgery and the almost hopeless condition of farming life.

The Minister for the North-West: I do not agree with that.

Mr. SEWARD: It is so, whether the Minister agrees or not. That makes one ask what is wrong with farm life? First I would say that undoubtedly it is the financial debt structure hanging over the industry. That must be dealt with. It is no use putting it off from day to day hoping that something will turn up.

Mr. Cross: How many millions of pounds have been written off already?

Mr. SEWARD: Members on this side of the House have made repeated efforts to get the Government to take some action towards a unified attempt to improve conditions and deal with the debt structure, but so far they have failed.

The Premier: No fear! I do not say everything you want has been done, but a lot has been done.

Mr. SEWARD: I know. The point I make is that conditions in the farming industry, owing to the debt structure, are such that people will not take it on and in many instances, when relief is afforded, the people benefiting are not the ones we want to get relief. Only a few weeks ago I heard of a property on which there was a mortgage of £10,000, but which was sold for £3,500. That indicates clearly that those responsible are prepared to make the sacrifice. They recognise that a lot of this money has to be written off. If we were to get down to a proper basis it would be done for the benefit of the men who have had the hard times. In this instance the farmer

did not get the benefit. A new man bought the property. It is clear that people do not want to see these properties standing idle. A debt has accumulated for one reason or another, but they would far sooner face the position and have the matter fixed up and get the farm back into production than have it abandoned and the assets wasting as has happened in many such places.

If the position is allowed to drift, one place will be sold here and another somewhere else, and the men and women who have had the burden of the years of debt structure will not get the benefit of the work they have done. They will lose heart and give up the properties and somebody else will obtain the farms at greatly reduced amounts. That is a fear that has been expressed on this side of the House on many occasions, and I hope something will be done to reduce this internal debt structure which is hanging over the farmers today. That is one reason for the decline in farming; another is the restriction of wheatgrowing. It may be said that this restriction was imposed by the Commonwealth Government, but we have to remember that the State Government is in charge of affairs in Western Australia and if Federal restrictions have a detrimental effect it is the duty of the Government here to see that they do not act detrimentally throughout the State. Wheat restriction requires very careful consideration because, if it is not carefully guarded against, I very much fear that this State will find itself with very little wheat growing in the near future. While I know that there may be a surplus of wheat at the present time we must remember that the United States have recently increased their wheat areas.

Mr. Patriek: By 15,000,000 acres.

Mr. SEWARD: That is so. They previously subscribed to the international agreement in 1939 restricting wheat crops. They have now altered that position and are urging the people to increase their wheat production. In this State a few years ago it was popular to recommend a restriction in our wheatgrowing activity provided it was done on an Australia-wide basis. But I want to draw the Government's attention to the manner in which wheat restriction is operating in this State. We may have agreed to the restriction of wheat areas if it had been applied to Australia as a whole, but I would remind the House that such

restriction has not been applied to the whole Commonwealth, but only to Western Australia. The restriction of $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent., was applied to this State alone. The other States were able to continue wheatgrowing as in previous years. I want to point out how this is being administered. I can do it best by giving an instance of a young man who came to me a couple of weeks ago. He told me that he had taken up an abandoned farm in 1936. It appealed to him because it was in fairly close proximity to a farm owned by his father. He took the property in 1936 but did not get a transfer through until two years later. About 1939 or 1940 he became engaged and set about putting the place in order so that he could have a home for himself and get married. By 1941 he had a couple of hundred acres fallowed for his first crop. When he applied for a license to grow wheat he was refused. He was told, "No, that particular block had no wheat crop in 1939, 1940, or 1941, the basic years, and consequently we will not allow you to grow any wheat on the property."

That is the policy. Wherever a property did not grow wheat in these basic years no license can be obtained to grow wheat on it today. That young fellow is growing up and what is his position? They said, "We will cut your father's license in two—from 450 acres to two licenses of 225 acres each—and give you one each." That was no good. The father would not be growing wheat if it was not necessary to meet his commitments and carry on his farm. The young man's commitments would obviously be additional to the father's. He only wanted an area from which to get his living, but they would not give it to him. Thus we have the $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. reduction, and a certain number of farmers each year go out of production, and that will lessen our wheat production by more than $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. At the same time there are these young fellows who cannot take out a license for properties which grew wheat prior to the basic year. That will further reduce production, and in addition I call the attention of the Government to a publication made available last week, wherein facts and figures from the Department of Information are shown, and it is stated that there will be a further reduction of 38 per cent. in the wheat production of Australia. If that 38 per cent. is to be applied to Western Australia in addition to the $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent., what kind

of wheat production will we have? That is the Commonwealth programme for 1943-1944. It will be a serious thing for many farmers in this State.

I mention this to the Government in the hope that it will take up the matter in the near future to ensure that Western Australia is not altogether deprived of wheat-growing. No matter whether it is profitable at present or whether there will be a surplus, I venture to say that, if it were not for wheat-growing, Western Australian agriculture would not be in the advanced position in which it is at the present time. Another matter seriously affecting the productivity of farms and primary production generally is the question of superphosphate. I know perfectly well that there is only a certain amount of superphosphate available, and that if, say, only 100,000 tons are available the farmers cannot be given 200,000 tons. At the same time we must remember, as was pointed out in the debate which took place here last year on the question, that many of our small farmers have their commitments to meet, and they cannot do that unless they can produce whatever their farms are best suited to produce. I do think, therefore, that there should be a definite minimum that a farmer should be able to get. Last year a case was put to me in which a man had 250 acres of crop to put in and he got $1\frac{3}{4}$ tons of super—21 bags! It was hopeless. How could he do anything with 21 bags of super?

Yesterday, in reply to a question asked by me, the Minister said that 70 tons of super had been made available to the Army—for one farm. I venture to say that no farmer in Western Australia got 70 tons of super last year. If any did, they were particularly lucky. On the figures quoted by the Minister, sufficient super was given to the Army to treat 3,000 acres at 50 lbs. to the acre. At the conference arranged by the Premier, the Under Secretary was adamant in not permitting a farmer to sow more than 40 lbs. of super to the acre and, reluctant as we were to do so, we had to tell the farmer that. The first question I want to ask the Minister is this: If that applied to the farmer, earning his living, why should the Army be allowed to sow 50 lbs. to the acre? I will not be satisfied with any off-hand reply. The farmers are entitled to know.

Another thing I want to know is why the military authorities were able to get that large amount of super. I wrote to the Minister about this. I saw seven trucks each containing ten tons of super. A little later I saw a very beautiful rich, green field with a good growth of pasture. I did not need anyone to tell me that there was more than 40 lbs. or 50 lbs. of super to the acre on that field. I say that there were 120 lbs. to the acre! The Minister can verify that if he likes. Now, is it fair that people earning their living, and who are dependent on pastures, should be compelled to use such a small quantity of super and yet the Army be able to get such a heavy dressing of super? I say it is not! Several of my constituents living on the western side of the Great Southern, where they go in for the growing of subterranean clover and the top-dressing of their fields, but are not interested in wheat production, said, "Can we get sufficient superphosphate to top-dress one-third of our cultivable areas?" The department said, "No, you can have 40 lbs. to the acre of what you used in the basic year, 1940." The Under Secretary has something to answer there, and I hope he will be able to produce an answer satisfactory to our farmers. It will take some doing. The superphosphate position is having a detrimental effect on the farms because the farmers say, "What is the use of staying on the farms; we cannot get superphosphate and now we are told it will be reduced to 30 lbs. next year?"

I do hope that, in compliance with the question I asked the Minister this afternoon, he will make every endeavour to make available to us next year the superphosphate from the islands adjacent to Western Australia in addition to whatever other superphosphate there may be. I want to endorse what the Leader of the Opposition said yesterday in connection with the butter rationing. This is another of the many things affecting the farming industry today. The rationing of farm butter may be all right in the South-West where there are numbers of creameries, butter factories, etc. But to tell the farmer in the other areas, even in the more favoured parts of the Great Southern, that he has to send his cream to a butter factory is simply to tell him to do something that he will not do. And why is this? Because he cannot profitably dis-

pose of his cream in that way. I will quote a case which illustrates my meaning. I know a farmer's wife, who came from farming people. She has been accustomed to making her cream into butter and selling it to different people. The butter rationing came in and her sales dropped by about 50 per cent. Instead of being able to sell 20 lbs. of butter per week, she sold 10 lbs. The cream that was over she sent to Perth, and received a return of only 6 lbs. of butter-fat from a can of cream. Had she made that into butter, she would have had 14 lbs. to 16 lbs. of butter.

How can we expect people to send cream to the factories for such a result? It must also be remembered that they cannot run to the siding every time they get a can of cream, or every three days if the can is full. They have not the petrol nor the tyres to do it. Consequently, the cream goes in once a week, with the result that when it gets to the factory it may be first-grade, but usually it is second-grade cream. So it simply means that the farmers' wives will not be bothered with the work and the cows will be turned out. That is what is happening today throughout the farming areas. The member for Subiaco told me something about free milk being required for children at Merredin, and it being necessary to send it up from Perth. The rationing of farm butter is simply causing people who have been buying it to purchase factory butter. Not 1 lb. of additional cream will be put into the factories as a result; and so the amount of export butter will be reduced instead of increased. I hope that the Minister for Agriculture will take this matter up with the Commonwealth Minister in an endeavour to secure the exemption of farm butter from rationing. This must be done. All the people between Perth and Geraldton have no local butter factories to take their cream; they have to send it 300 or 400 miles.

Mr. Marshall: What applies to butter applies to egg production.

Mr. SEWARD: It does not apply yet, but it soon will. Whatever arrangement is made with the Commonwealth authorities, I hope it will be made quickly.

Another matter that is detrimentally affecting the farming industry is the restriction on tyres. A regulation has been issued under which farmers cannot get tyres for their vehicles even if there is only one

vehicle on the farm. The farmers have to group themselves into parties of ten, though the number in special cases may be smaller. They have then to select one man of the ten who is given priority 3, which enables him to get tyres. The families of the other nine men, when they wish to go to the siding, have to travel on his truck or be content to remain on their farms for the duration of the war. I have instances of farmers located 20 or 22 miles from a siding. There may be only two or three of them living close together; they are not on the telephone, and yet some of those men cannot get tyres because they are not members of a group. Of course there is nobody with whom they can group.

When those people come to Perth, as they have to do occasionally, and see the lines of motorcars drawn up day and night outside the picture shows, they naturally ask, "Why are we penalised in this way?" Had this matter been placed in the hands of the Transport Board or the Liquid Fuel Control Board in this State, both of which bodies are conversant with local requirements, I do not think the present system would ever have been put into operation. However, it has been placed in the hands of Commonwealth people who do not understand the conditions. Senator Fraser, while in Perth, received a deputation, and he said that suitable provision was being made for such cases. When he brought the matter under the notice of the Commonwealth Minister, Mr. Beasley, he simply passed it on to the Deputy Director, who stated, "I am in charge and it is not going to be altered." We will not get people to stay on their farms under such conditions. In Pingelly, on any day of the week, one may see the cars of commercial travellers. Why do we want them running about the State in these times?

The Premier: There are not many commercial travellers going out in cars now.

Mr. SEWARD: If the Premier so desired, I could supply details of the number of cars counted in Pingelly on each day of the week, which would show that there were not fewer than two different cars every day. I met one of Nestle's men in a motorcar at the eastern end of my electorate. Surely the business of that firm could be done by means of telephone, telegram or letter. This touring of the country by commercial travellers should have been stopped

long ago, especially if it means the penalising of people who have no alternative means of transport, and who are suffering considerable hardships on their farms.

On top of these difficulties, we have the manpower authorities to deal with. A lady and her daughter are running a farm in my area, and I have been trying since last March to get her former employee released from the Army. He is now in Queensland, having returned from the Middle East. Up to date I have not been successful. The lady cannot get anyone to run the farm. A severe storm swept the district in March, took off part of the house roof and caused fences to be destroyed by falling trees. She had to depend upon neighbours to help her, neighbours who were in a similar fix. I saw the manpower authorities and asked that the soldier be released. He is engaged to the daughter, and in due course the property will probably pass to him and his fiancée. My request was refused. I was informed that Army Headquarters refused to release him.

The Premier: Did the man himself make application to be released?

Mr. SEWARD: Yes, I saw to that. When I waited on the National Service Authorities in order to get a man the first question asked was, "What wages are being offered?" I replied, "I will discuss wages with you when we have secured the man." Of course one man might be worth only £1 a week while another would be cheap at £5 a week. Later the manpower authorities got into touch with me and informed me that they had a man for the work. I found that the man had been a cripple and was not mentally capable; yet such a man was sent to the farm to take charge. What a hopeless proposition! So I wrote again to the soldier and advised him to apply to his commanding officer for release, giving full particulars of his case. He wrote as directed and in due course was informed by one of his officers that his application had been sent on but had been turned down by the manpower authorities in Western Australia. Thus, one of the applications was turned down by the Army and the other by the manpower authorities. This unfortunate woman is still without help. I could mention other cases.

The Premier: All of us could.

Mr. SEWARD: When the Manpower Department was created, I understood it was to

represent the civilian side—that it would confer with the Army authorities and that the two points of view would be discussed.

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: They can only investigate; that is all the authority they have.

Mr. SEWARD: There is something radically wrong. I do not think there is a more deserving case in Western Australia than the one I have just quoted. There is a heavy mortgage on the property and the woman is certainly entitled to receive relief. After the fences had been broken down, she could not even get the sheep back on to the property. This sort of thing is detrimentally affecting farm life. People who are growing old will not continue on the farms and those who are growing up will not assume the responsibility, because it is killing all enthusiasm. I bring these matters before the Government in the hope that it will realise how seriously they are affecting the farming industry of this State.

The next matter I want to deal with is allied to the farming industry. My reference is to our expert advisers, particularly those attached to the Agricultural Department. I wish to refer to two of these officers, namely the Chief Wool Adviser and the Poultry Expert. I have noticed, of course, that when there is a Party meeting or when the House is assembling one always knows where Ministers are, for one sees their cars outside. That is perfectly right. I take no exception whatever to that. Ministers are busy men, and cannot fight the general public for seats on trams. They must have motor cars of their own. However, the expert advisers of the Agricultural Department are just as important to the people in the country as are Ministers to the city. These men have been appointed to their positions so that they may be able to advise and guide the people in the country.

The Chief Wool Adviser is appointed to go out and advise country people, who are eager to have visits from that officer. But he has no transport. He has to be dependent on trains for transport, or on the goodwill of somebody who will drive him about when he gets to the centre requiring his advice. Such a position is absolutely hopeless. Take the case of the Chief Wool Adviser if he come into my electorate. To go up and hold a meeting at any of the main centres would necessitate his spending two days there because the trains do not fit in. Thus he is practically debarred from holding more than

three meetings a week. With a car he could hold two meetings a day. Moreover he has to get back to his office to attend to correspondence. In my opinion the services of the officer are only half utilised. The people in the rural districts want him to advise them, and I consider it eminently desirable that he should be able to visit them. He ought to be provided with a motorear for that purpose. I do not say it is essential that he should have the car entirely to himself; possibly he could share it with the Poultry Expert.

That officer can go about within a radius of 25 miles of the General Post Office, but he cannot go out into the country. Moreover, the people who need his services do not live on the roads; mostly they live away back. I understand that about 50 or 60 per cent. of the eggs reaching the metropolitan area come from the country districts, and that only about 25 per cent. of the eggs are produced in the metropolitan area itself. That single fact shows how vitally necessary it is for the expert to get out where the eggs are produced. And there is another aspect.

Large numbers of day-old chickens are bought by residents of rural districts. I know of one instance—the lady concerned told me of it only two weeks ago—where consignments of day-old chickens were obtained for two consecutive years and every chicken was lost. I happened to be with the Poultry Expert when he was in that district two years ago and saw the fowls which had been reared from the day-old chickens. He said he was very pleased to see them as he had not seen any obtained from the same source. He condemned the whole lot and said, "Fatten them and send them off to market, for they are utterly unsuited for egg-laying." I have made an appeal on behalf of these officers to enable them to get around and give producers the benefit of their advice, so that it may be utilised to the profit of men on the land. Some of the chickens sent up were a few weeks old, and they had not been taught to go up on the roost; so they immediately developed a disease in consequence. That is what the Poultry Expert told me. People embarking on something they do not know much about should be started on right lines.

There is another matter I wish to deal with in connection with experts. Some years ago I made reference to the fact that sometimes we find

officers in high governmental positions giving advice that is not always good, and concerning which we, therefore, have to be rather careful. I was interested to read some advice given a few days ago by Mr. Murray, who is, I believe, Sheep Officer to the Agricultural Bank. Mr. Murray advises farmers not to break up their merino flocks through being tempted by the present high prices of cross-bred wool or fat lambs. In that he was possibly quite right. I shall not dispute such a matter with a gentleman bearing the name of Murray—a household word in connection with merino sheep. I shall not disagree with him on that subject. But I shall disagree with him on his next point. He is reported as having said—

Any settler having an established merino flock could, if he so desired, participate in the high prices being obtained for lambs, by mating portion of his ewes for a season with pure bred British rams, but the progeny (both ewe and wether lambs) should by all means be sold. The name of Murray, I repeat, stands high in the merino world; but when he comes down to advising Agricultural Bank farmers—who, speaking generally, would probably be small farmers and in many cases men who have not had very much to do with sheep—to mate merino ewes with British rams, he is giving those men a terrible task, and one which cannot be carried out profitably.

The Premier: I know that much!

Mr. SEWARD: The Premier knows it cannot be done?

The Premier: Yes.

Mr. SEWARD: But that is the advice Mr. Murray gave those farmers.

The Premier: I have seen a lot of lambs die that were so bred.

Mr. SEWARD: I have tried to get the unfortunate things away from the ewes on too many occasions not to know that one cannot successfully mate British rams with merino ewes. Nevertheless, that is the advice that has gone out in many instances to men who do not know much about sheep. They have a flush season, and so find it necessary to purchase some sheep. At the sales they find plenty of merinos mated to British-merino rams. They buy these sheep, and expect an 80 per cent. lambing. They are lucky to have one of 25 per cent. Such advice is disastrous to be given out to farmers by a man reputed to be an expert. By-the-by, the same man advised the farmers

to go in for summer lambs. I would suggest that the Minister have a talk with the Agricultural Bank Commissioners and ascertain why this officer tells clients of the Bank to adopt these unproved theories. At the end of the year when these farmers go to the Bank for a review of their finances and report that they had only a 20 per cent. lambing from, say, 300 ewes, naturally the institution is disappointed.

The Premier: What became of the rest of the 300?

Mr. SEWARD: Of course the officer was admitting that farmers should not dispose of their merino flocks because of the high value of merino wool, but said they could participate in the better prices of wool and of fat lambs at present by mating their merino ewes with British rams, so that when the price of fat lambs went down they could revert to merino rams. But it was tragic advice.

I also desire to draw the attention of the Minister acting for the Minister for Agriculture to a statement which the latter made last year. A deputation waited upon Hon. F. J. S. Wise in regard to rabbit skins. In the course of his reply the Minister said—

Unfortunately, Western Australian skins were suitable for the fur export trade. the Eastern States, giving a low yield of fur; and few, if any, skins from Western Australia were suitable for the fur export trade.

When speaking last year on the agricultural Estimates, I instanced the case of a consignment of skins that had been sent from Western Australia—as a matter of fact, from Ongerup, and I think the Minister interjected at the time that skins from Ongerup could not be taken as a fair sample of Western Australian skins—and I said that those skins were taken from rabbits that had been poisoned. They were sent to the Riverina and from there to Melbourne for sale, where they realised 131d. for 2 lbs. and 110½d. for ½ lb. The remainder of those skins was sent to Fremantle, where the top price obtained was 75d.

We had another instance recently. Senator Marwick had a poisoning done by strychnine and apples. He took some of the skins to the Eastern States—he did not select them—and put them in the hands of one of the merchants in Sydney for sale. At first he said, "Put them up with a bundle of skins and see what they will fetch." The merchant said, "No, we cannot do that. All

skins sold in this market must bear the name of the State of origin." The skins were therefore sold as Western Australian skins and when put up for sale realised the following prices:—1 lb. each at 103d., 127d., 97d., 96d., 112½d., and 128½d. The remainder of that catch was sent to Fremantle and realised in the market there 60d. and 38d.

Member: There was a rake-off for someone.

Mr. SEWARD: The first point I wish to make is that every pound of skin sold in Sydney was graded and realised a separate price, as will be noted from the figures I have stated. Those figures are evidence of careful grading. Yet in Fremantle skins from the same bale were sold at 60d. and 38d. Something is radically wrong there. The matter was mentioned last year. I venture to assert that the men engaged in the rabbit industry in this State have been taken down for hundreds of thousands of pounds through having to sell their skins here instead of sending them to the Eastern States for sale. A similar occurrence took place some years ago with our wool. The member for Beverley will confirm my statement that we could send wool then to the Eastern States and it would fetch 3d., 4d., or 6d. per lb. more than it would fetch here. I do not know the reason. With regard to the rabbit skins, there may not be the same competition here, but something is radically wrong and it wants remedying.

The skins should be appraised so that they could be sold here at something like the same price that they would fetch in the Eastern States. Many people will say that the farmer ought to poison rabbits for his own protection, but apparently they do not take into account our depleted manpower and the relatively high cost of poison. An ounce bottle of strychnine that could have been purchased for 5s. some years ago now costs 11s. and in some instances as much as 13s. The price is so high that the man on the land cannot afford to pay it. Mr. Tensdale stated on his return the other day from a tour of the Great Southern district that he was alarmed at the extraordinary number of rabbits that were to be seen in that district. He has reason to be alarmed, because it is a big question for the State. I hope the Minister will go into this matter of the value of our rabbit skins.

I shall not keep members much longer, but I have one or two other matters about which I wish to have a friendly talk with the Minister for Railways and Justice. I shall first refer to the Department of Justice. I may be wrong, but I think that when people set up in business in the city of Perth, persons dealing with them have a right to expect that they will live up to their responsibilities. This matter particularly affects the man on the land. Recently a man came to me in a very perturbed state. He had received a notification from the Commissioner of Taxation stating that his returns for the years 1939, 1940 and 1941 had not been lodged and that unless they were lodged within a certain period the Commissioner would be forced to take legal action, and that in any case the taxpayer would have to pay a fine for late lodgment of the returns. The man told me he had instructed a firm of accountants, who had done his work for many years, to lodge his returns. The firm had his books and all the information required. I went to see this accountant, Mr. A. E. Richardson, of St. George's-ter. He said he had the books and the information and so on.

Mr. Watts: Had he kept them for two or three years?

Mr. SEWARD: Three years.

Mr. Watts: He had had the books all that time?

Mr. SEWARD: He had been paid each year, but had not filed the returns. I did not think any more about the matter until later, when the man again came to see me with another letter from the Commissioner of Taxation. I inquired whether his accountant had lodged the returns. The man replied that he had not. I again called on the accountant, who said he had been ill. However, in the course of the next few weeks I received a notification to say that he had lodged the returns. A week later still another man came to me with the same complaint. He also had received a letter saying that he would be fined for late lodgment of returns. The man he employed was this same compiler of income tax returns and had been doing this man's business for years. I then thought it was up to somebody else to have a go and accordingly I wrote to the Minister for Justice and told him of the occurrence. I asked him to get the Crown Law Department to write a letter to the income tax compiler requesting him

to live up to his responsibilities, as he had been paid to do the work, and that if he did not do it the department would be compelled to take action. The Minister for Justice, however, replied stating that the matter had nothing to do with him, and that the farmer complaining must proceed against the income tax compiler according to law, or something to that effect. That is all very well, but these farmers live in the country and it would cost them at least £10 to come to Perth to consult a lawyer, in addition to which they would have to pay the legal expenses. I do not think that is fair. We have a Crown Law Department, which should take action against persons posing as compilers of income tax returns who neglect to do work they are paid to do. Two other cases have been brought to my notice, making four in all.

Mr. Mann: Was the same accountant concerned each time?

Mr. SEWARD: Yes.

Mr. Watts: I have had three or four cases brought to my notice.

Mr. SEWARD: It is wilful neglect to fail to carry out the duty of compiling returns, and such neglect results in persons being threatened with prosecution. One of the men I mentioned sent the accountant an extra £1 for a copy of his balance sheet, but did not receive it. The Crown Law Department contends that this is a Commonwealth affair. I went to the Commissioner of Taxation.

The Minister for Justice: It is a private matter concerning a private person.

Mr. SEWARD: A private person's concern! If the Government had lived up to its responsibility there would have been no necessity for these complaints, as the Companies Bill would have been passed instead of the measure dragging on here for three years. The Companies Bill would have protected them because this man would have been registered. They will be protected in future, because an amendment to the Income Tax Act put through by the Commonwealth Parliament makes provision that before any of these men can compile income tax returns they have to be approved by the Commissioner of Taxation. In the past, however, there has been no protection.

The Minister for Justice: The Companies Bill would not have come into operation until after the war.

Mr. SEWARD: If it had gone through Parliament, the responsibility would have been removed from the Minister. However, I found another department in the Government which took the matter up. I refer to the Police Department, which got the man to lodge his returns. It was the responsibility of the Crown Law Department to give me assistance in this case. The Minister shakes his head. I remember that years ago a Minister of the Crown in his private dealings was assisted by the Crown Law Department, because it was published in "The West Australian." That was in the matter of buying a house. If the department can afford to give such advice to a Minister of the Crown in his private capacity, it can afford to give assistance to the people I have mentioned.

The Minister for Justice: That was not in my time.

Mr. SEWARD: No, it was years ago. I would now refer to a disgraceful state of affairs in the transport system in the city. I would probably not have referred to it had I not had personal experience. A little while ago I had occasion to visit Fremantle on a Sunday afternoon. I had an appointment in the city in the evening so I wanted to catch a bus back. I went to where I was told I could do so, but I did not catch the bus. I thought a bus would come along and one could board it in an orderly fashion, but as soon as it stopped there was one blind scramble and the bus was soon full. As I had to keep my appointment, I took care to see that I was on the next bus. It was a matter of fighting and letting every man, woman and child scramble for a place. That was the only experience I had in Fremantle. On another occasion when I came to Perth in a bus, the people surged out into the Terrace, at imminent danger to their limbs, in order to get on to the bus. When it pulled up, the exit door—as I have noticed has been the case since—was opposite a tree with a seat around it. It was the most delightful experience to fight one's way out of the bus and over the seat with other people trying to fight their way into the bus. Yet when the matter was brought under the notice of the Minister all he could say was that he did not see anything wrong.

The Minister for Justice: Are you speaking of private buses?

Mr. SEWARD: No, I am speaking of trolley-buses. The bus which stopped by the tree was a trolley-bus, and 50 people tried to get into it! Anybody need only have walked down the Terrace for months past to see the wild scramble that has constantly taken place.

The Minister for Justice: That applies everywhere throughout Australia; I have seen it.

Mr. SEWARD: I would be pleased if the Premier would lay on the Table a report on the result of the Minister's visit to the Eastern States. I notice that the Premier is not going to do anything about it. If it does not interest the Government, it interests me and other people, and I would be glad to see the report tabled.

The Premier: Have you been over there?

Mr. SEWARD: No, but the Minister has.

The Premier: It is almost impossible to get on a bus at all in some places in the Eastern States.

Mr. SEWARD: I have no hesitation in saying that it is possible to do so here, and in an orderly way, if somebody likes to take the matter in hand.

The Minister for Justice: They do not give you time to get off the buses, either!

Mr. SEWARD: That is the case there with the trains as well unless one prepares to alight before the train stops.

Mr. Watts: Why should we adopt the bad practices of the Eastern States?

Mr. SEWARD: I also notice that a report was furnished to the Government by the Transport Board, or by Mr. Millen or somebody, concerning the question of transport. According to the Press, the Premier said nothing was going to be done. I should like to see that report tabled. It might provide us with very useful information, and suggestions might be made, if the Government has decided it is not able to do anything in this matter.

Mr. Watts: How are the taxis going?

Mr. SEWARD: I am afraid I cannot touch on that. As a matter of fact, I asked a question on the matter last session, when that wonderful scheme was propounded to taxi-drivers. Things were going to be very nice. The taxi-drivers were to have their fares displayed in the taxis and they were not to go out after a certain time at night without a permit. However, nothing was done. When I asked the Minister a question in March, he told me regulations would be

gazetted but they have not been issued. If one is in the city and wants a taxi, he can want a taxi, but if the newsboys want one for members of the Allied Services, there is a whistle and a car will roll round on two wheels and the taxi is there! If the Government has no consideration for the people of the State, it might have some consideration for these Allied servicemen and protect them from the exploitation that is taking place. The Minister may think there is no exploitation, but let him have a look. I took a notice out of the "Trade Gazette" which will give some indication to the Minister.

The Minister for Labour: Would you not think that the Allied servicemen had brought a lot of exploitation on themselves?

Mr. SEWARD: I still say that I think the Government should save these men from being exploited by our own people. To say, "Let somebody else do something," is to shelve responsibility. The quotation from the "Gazette" is as follows:—

Hire-purchase agreements registered under the Bills of Sale Act.

... Taxi-driver, East Cannington. Hire of Chrysler-Plymouth sedan licensed as taxi car, fitted with Lewis gas-producer for three months and two weeks from 5th May, 1943, at the premium of £90 (payable £30 cash and £4 16s. weekly) and the rental of £12 per week with option of extension for a further six months.

And so this taxi was hired for three months and two weeks for the sum of £270! Yet the Minister does not think there is any exploitation occurring!

Mr. Mann: And they are the black market for tyres!

Mr. SEWARD: When I asked questions on this matter earlier I did not know much about the matter. I thought there was one licensing authority for taxis, but I find there are two—the Liquid Fuel Board and the Police Department—and they act independently of each other. When I found that the taxis registered on the 30th June last totalled 133, of which 41 were owned by companies, and 91 by individuals, I thought that was all the taxis there were; but I discovered that anyone with a gas-producer did not go to the Liquid Fuel Board but to the Police Department and registered his taxi there. So instead of there being 133 taxis, there were 190 at the 31st December. I hope the Minister will not let the taxi ramp go on any longer.

The Minister for Justice: Do not look at me.

Mr. SEWARD: It is not the Minister's province, but that of the Minister for Works and the Police Department. The matter should be co-ordinated and the control placed under the Liquid Fuel Board or the Transport Board. When two bodies act independently there cannot be effective control.

The only other thing I want to mention is a case that occurred last year, and over which I have had a fair amount of correspondence with the Minister for Railways, but I have not been able to get any satisfaction. It represents something quite unfair to country residents. Last Christmas day the train which goes from Perth to Katanning lit no fewer than 20 odd fires between Pingelly and Narrogin, a distance of 30 miles. Fortunately, it was a cool day. Had it been hot, there would have been some pretty extensive fires in that district. I happened to be in Narrogin that afternoon and on my way there, at midday, there were no signs of fires, but when I returned I could see fires and when coming into Cuballing I saw one fire which extended for a mile on Mr. Hinkley's property. After passing Cuballing I saw another fire spread over half a mile, and in Pingelly was another fire while four were started on Mr. B. D. Smith's property north of the town.

These fires, I say deliberately and I challenge the Minister to disprove what I say, were lit by the engine. I can bring evidence to prove that statement. In Mr. Hinkley's case a double firebreak had been ploughed inside his fence, so it cannot be said that he had not taken precautions. I wrote to the Minister and informed him of what had happened and asked him to have an investigation, because I was certain the engine had caused the trouble. In due course the Minister wrote back and said that two officials—a length-runner and someone else—had made an inspection and found evidence of fire both inside and outside the railway reserve, but there was no indication to show how it was started. As a matter of fact, there had been rain between the time of the fire and this inspection. I wrote back and told the Minister that I had seen the fires and knew they were caused by the engine. I asked him to have an inquiry made. He resolutely refused my request although I could have brought testimony

from the chairman of the road board and others who happened to be at their properties adjoining the railways and beat out the fires. There was even the fact that the railway fences had been burnt down.

Mr. McLarty: What is the use of an inquiry? They will not pay anything.

Mr. SEWARD: Claims have been paid.

Mr. Doney: I have had four paid.

Mr. SEWARD: I wish I had the hon. member's influence. If a man ploughs a firebreak around his property, that does not give the railway license to burn him out.

The Minister for Justice: The department takes every precaution possible.

Mr. SEWARD: What is the use of talking that stuff? I know the Minister said in his letter that the engines had spark-arresters. They may get burnt through. I suppose it was spontaneous combustion; or the grass was unduly elated by the fact that it was Christmas Day! That stuff will not go down with the farming community.

The Minister for Justice: I suppose it must be negligence on the part of the railway workers. They do not look after the spark-arresters.

Mr. SEWARD: The Minister would probably like to saddle me with that statement, but I refuse to accept it. I do not even know the composition of the spark-arresters. This one may have become burnt out.

The Minister for Justice: No.

Mr. SEWARD: It may have dropped off.

The Minister for Justice: No.

Mr. SEWARD: Well, something else happened. The fact remains that the engine started these fires, and I can bring that evidence forward. The department should live up to its responsibilities and recoup Mr. Hinkley for his loss, which amounted to about £125.

The Minister for Justice: I am very sorry for the farmers.

Mr. SEWARD: Hang your sorrow! I hope the Minister will some day be burnt out lock, stock and barrel by the railways. He will then probably be able to appreciate the viewpoint of the unfortunate settler. These people have their capital invested in their properties and as a result of these fires they lose their feed and have to dump their sheep on to a falling market, and then the Minister says, "We will not take any responsibility." I enter an emphatic protest against that. I do not say that a man

who does not take precautions should get compensation, but when a farmer has done all he can and the department comes along and sets fire to his property, he should be recompensed. I protest against the unfair treatment meted out to Hinkley. If during burning-off operations a fire gets away and does damage, then the farmer from whose property the fire started is liable at law for any consequent damage, despite his having taken all legal precautions. The Minister knows that perfectly well. The law that applies to the individual should apply also to the Government.

Mr. WITHERS (Bunbury): Once more it is my lot to add a contribution to the Address-in-reply. As I look round the Chamber I see that members are mostly disinterested in what the other member is bringing forward in connection with this matter. On previous occasions I have said that possibly the Address-in-reply is not such an important question, other than to allow members to ventilate their parochial grievances. I have heard a good deal about that this afternoon. I do not intend to tell this House the names and troubles of all my electors. I would rather confine my remarks, as nearly as possible, to the Governor's Speech, which is under debate. Taking the second paragraph of the Speech dealing with the question of revenue, and the surplus of £24,436 for the year, I am sorry to see that we have a surplus. I am not one of those who look forward with pleasure to surpluses in local authorities or governmental authorities of any description. I do not think it is our function to show surpluses.

Mr. Doney: Would you strive for a deficit every session?

Mr. WITHERS: Possibly a deficit would be beneficial under certain circumstances. We can remember when "Gone-a-million-Jack" told the people they had a £1,000,000 deficit, which was in their pockets. He was quite right. Monetary reformers were not as common in those days as now. But they are getting right down to what the Hon. John Scaddan said many years ago. Because we have a deficit, it is not to say that we are hard up. It may be that the advancement and progress of Western Australia have been made possible by our deficits.

Mr. Doney: The bigger the deficit the better off we are.

Mr. WITHERS: I do not say that, but I would suggest that, as taxing masters, we have not the right to tax the people for more money than is required to cover the services for the year.

Mr. Doney: The two things are really not connected.

Mr. WITHERS: They are. I deplore the fact that it was not possible to spend this £24,000, and so I think does the Premier. The Government, generally, would have liked to spend it. Members should not overlook the fact that the Government has been definitely hampered by manpower restrictions. Possibly some of the works that have been neglected would have received the requisite attention had manpower been available, and this money would then have been in the pockets of the people and we would not have shown a surplus of £24,000.

The Premier: That is so. We are £150,000 down on permanent way maintenance.

Mr. WITHERS: Recently 40 men were required for the Griffin mine at Collie, and the Minister for Industrial Development could not get sufficient men for the Lake Champion project. That has been the experience right through. But for the manpower restrictions, this money would have been expended and we would not have been showing a surplus. It is always pleasant to feel that one can square the ledger and come out on the right side, but I would have liked to see some of the works that have been neglected for years through lack of finance carried out when money was available. However, owing to manpower restrictions, this has not been possible.

The Leader of the Opposition and members supporting him seem disinclined to give credit to the Government for having established secondary industries outside the metropolitan area. I am afraid the reason is to be found in the fact that when we establish secondary industries in rural districts, we shall be industrialising those districts and they will no longer be sacrosanct to members of the Country Party.

Mr. Thorn: That statement is not correct.

Mr. WITHERS: The industrialists, however, will build up country towns and consume the produce raised on the farms.

Mr. McLarty interjected.

Mr. WITHERS: The member for Murray-Wellington is interested in the development of a country district that eventually will be industrialised to such an extent that Labour will have strong support there. I want the people to realise that we must have secondary industries side by side with primary production. Western Australia is a primary producing State, but we should not be content for it to remain so for all time. The member for Pingelly quoted figures to show the decrease of population in the country. I am not going to weary the House or "Hansard" by quoting figures. There has been a decline of population over a period in the rural areas, but secondary industries have made progress and have attracted population, and the State is getting the benefit of an increase in that direction. The Government ought to be commended for its action in fostering secondary industries.

We have too long delayed the development of some of our resources. A matter of great importance to the State at the moment is that of providing supplies of phosphatic rock. We are being forced into the position of doing something in the direction of exploiting local deposits which, in the past, were regarded as being uneconomical to work, simply because we could import phosphatic rock much cheaper from Nauru. When men are out of work, we ought to be far-sighted enough to realise that a time might come when we shall have to supply more of our own requirements, and local resources should then be exploited at almost any cost. Then, when we became confronted by adverse conditions, we would be in a better position to meet them. We would have some background for our operations. Although the alunite deposits at Lake Champion are being developed to produce potash, the representatives of the farmers opposite are not prepared to give the Government credit for opening up the industry.

The Leader of the Opposition stated that he was not going to make hard work for himself by giving the Government credit for what it had done, because this would have a boomerang effect in that Labour supporters would quote it at elections in commendation of the Government.

Mr. Thorn: That is not what he said.

The Premier: Yes, it is.

Mr. WITHERS: The Leader of the Opposition is afraid that if he gives the

Government credit for anything, it will be quoted against him later on. The hon. member made very heavy weather with his speech. In fact, since I have occupied a seat in the House, I have never heard a Leader of the Opposition make such heavy going of it.

Mr. Doney: Are not you exaggerating?

Mr. Thorn: He made a very good speech.

Mr. WITHERS: The hon. member read a lot of extracts and gave a lot of quotations but only part of his deliverance could be described as a speech. Even this was not a little "propagandaish." I have heard it said that the last session of a Parliament is the election session and that little business is done because every member has his mind on the impending election. Perhaps we have our minds on an election but not a State election. The Federal election has distracted our minds and possibly we are not concentrating attention on our duties as we should, because we are trying to help in the Federal campaign. I do not agree with the statement that in the first session of a Parliament all the seats are only being warmed, that in the second session all the work is done, and in the third session that all thoughts are centred on the coming election. There is no reason why as much legislation should not be brought down this session as was brought down in the second, third or fourth sessions. I am here to do my job this session just as much as in any other session.

Mr. Fox: We all are.

Mr. WITHERS: Since the idea was first mooted of establishing an iron-blast furnace in this State, I have been interested in it because it is one of the essential developments arising from the presence of iron-ore deposits, and when speaking of this project, I must admit that I have my eye on Bunbury as offering the most suitable site. I have no complaint to make concerning the venture, or the try-out the Minister is giving the project. I consider the hon. gentleman has gone to the right place to get his deposit of ore and his charcoal on the spot. It is all-essential that we should have the try-out made where it can be made under advantageous conditions. If it can be done economically, Bunbury is the only place where the industry can be established profitably.

I quote a paragraph from His Excellency's Speech—

The State's coal deposit at Collie is of inestimable value at the present time, and every endeavour is being made to increase output.

The member for Claremont has already dealt extensively with the question of electricity produced at the source. We have had numerous inquiries in the form of Royal Commissions and Select Committees and boards into the subject of Collie coal, and have found the recommendations made by such bodies not always to the advantage, possibly, of the suggestions of the member for Claremont. I have no objection to the extra unit the Government is establishing in the metropolitan area. It is essential that we should be more greatly electrified in the metropolitan area than we are, because many services here are not using electricity today, owing to insufficiency of output. But there is also a definite demand for a South-West power scheme in the very near future—not in the distant future at all! We talk about our secondary industries, but where shall we put them? Come down to Boyanup, Donnybrook, Pinjarra or somewhere else!

The first question to be asked is, invariably, who can supply power and how much power can be supplied? It is just a question of which comes first—the hen or the egg. I do not know which is the hen and which is the egg in this case. In the first place we must have electric power to encourage industry. And we will get it! I can see in the South-West of this State great prospects of development if we establish supplies of electric current for secondary industries there. Then there is the question in connection with Collie coal, which has not been considered good for gas production. Persons are now making investigations on that head. Griffin coal can be gasified, and therefore no reason exists why we should not be using gas extensively straight from the pit's mouth, and at lower cost, and with less loss in transmission. Then we would be able to use Collie coal for other and more valuable purposes. The matter is at present only in the experimental or investigation stage. An expert from New South Wales has the matter in hand, and he is stated to have obtained results from coal inferior to Collie coal. I trust the Government will not stand in the way of the project, but will endeavour to ensure that full advantage shall be taken of our local re-

sources, and more particularly our Collie coal. Following up the subject of primary production, let me say that the Government has been instrumental in establishing the flax industry in Western Australia, at the desire of the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. Doney: Then the Commonwealth is responsible, and not the State!

Mr. WITHERS: Has not the State done a considerable amount of the work? It is not a question of the source of the idea, but who is carrying it into effect. It is a question of the area that can be put under flax and the method of treatment. Twelve months ago I expressed the hope that the flax industry might be established here on such a basis that it would become an all-time industry.

The dehydration plant put in by the Government in connection with the fruit industry is a credit to Ministers. I want the Country Party and the farmers to appreciate the fact that these things are not done solely for the benefit of the consumer but in the first place for the benefit of the producer. Credit is due to the Government from that aspect. As regards the Railway Department, I deplore the fact, with the member for Claremont, that the debt on our railways system is so stupendous. I have accepted the information given to the hon. member by the Premier. I do not want to wait 58 years before the whole thing is cleared up. To-day possibly we are waking up to the necessities of the situation. Had this State adopted a reasonable system of taxation in the early days of the railway system, our present position would be much better. However, Governments have not been popular with the people when they have attempted to impose adequate taxation. We have borrowed something like £200,000,000 for war purposes, and our taxation amounts to about £350,000,000 annually. These things have been done and are being done because they must be done; but we could do them in peacetime also.

The people of Western Australia own the railways of Western Australia. Our farmers would not be established in the country as they are, but for the State railway system. There would be few people in the city were it not that we have farmers in the country. The people in the city who do not use the railways to any great extent should be compelled to contribute a greater amount towards their cost. I think it right

that the farmers should have their superphosphate and other requirements transported by the railways at a low rate; in my opinion, the rate should be even lower than it is now. The people who do not use the railways should be compelled to contribute to their cost because the railways have been mainly responsible for the development of the State, from Esperance in the south to Wiluna in the north and down to Augusta in the South-West. Had it not been for the railways, this would not be the productive State it now is. We are belated in our efforts to overtake this burden of debt.

We showed a deficit last year, according to "The West Australian," of £61,421. Why? Not because the railways were not paying. Our receipts over expenditure amounted to £970,385, but then we had an interest bill to pay which resulted in the deficit of £61,000. It is the same old interest bill that is hanging round our neck, and it could have been avoided had we taxed ourselves to pay the capital cost in past years. Were it not for the interest bill, the railway system could be worked much cheaper and with greater benefit to the people; in fact, costs could be reduced to a decimal point if people who did not use the railways were taxed to pay for them.

Mr. North: Like 4 per cent. preference shares, the interest comes first all the time.

Mr. WITHERS: Yes. I am pleased to note that the housing question has been brought up. Timber and shipping also are mentioned in the Speech.

Mr. J. Hegney: There is not too much in the Speech about corrugated iron.

Mr. WITHERS: No. However, a church was erected in Bunbury in 1865 that has not a piece of iron in it. It was built for the Church of England and has a roof of shingles. We should not need to worry about galvanised iron if we used our local products to the best advantage. We could do with less imports of corrugated iron if we used shingles or tiles and probably these would be cheaper.

I am a little concerned about the timber industry. For 20 years in this House I have been trying to get something done for the Bunbury harbour that should have been done before I became a member. It is deplorable that we should be sending lumpers from Bunbury to Fremantle when greater use could be made of the Bunbury harbour.

It is not always a question of depth of water, because there must be many vessels which call at Fremantle that could be berthed at the Bunbury harbour. The two ports are closely associated geographically, but not otherwise. Instead of transferring lumpers from Bunbury to Fremantle, such ships as can be accommodated at Bunbury should be sent there. They could get there overnight.

Without quoting figures, I notice that moneys contributed to our superannuation fund have been invested in war loans. When that fund was created, the Statistician naturally wanted to be on the safe side and he accordingly fixed the amounts of the contributions to be paid to the fund. Considering the amount that has been accumulated, I think those in receipt of superannuation should receive greater consideration. When the Premier introduced the legislation on this subject, he said the time might come when it would be possible either to reduce the amount of the contributions to the fund or to increase the payments to be made to the persons benefiting from it. I do not know whether I am right in saying that, but I think the Premier mentioned it when the Bill was being introduced.

The Premier: An actuarial examination is to take place every five years.

Mr. WITHERS: I bring that matter up because I have respect for the people who have been retired from the Public Service of this State. Some of them are not as well off on £2 a week as a husband and wife on the old age pension. Owing to the increase in the cost of living and basic wage increases, it should be possible for the Government to take into consideration the question of reviewing the payments to be made from the superannuation fund.

We have heard a great deal of criticism about boards. The Commonwealth Government has appointed many boards and the State also has appointed some. For some time past I have had in mind that we Parliamentarians in Western Australia are not overworked.

Mr. Doney: You speak for yourself. It is not so on this side of the House.

Mr. WITHERS: I speak for myself. I think Parliamentarians could be employed upon committees of advice and committees of inquiry, and thus we could avoid appointing boards, the members of which must be paid.

Mr. Doney: There is something in what you say, but your last statement is wrong.

Mr. WITHERS: I am of opinion that Parliamentarians could be employed to assist the Government along the lines I have indicated. At all events, I could find time on occasions to do something to assist the Government. I am not all the time receiving on my doorstep people who have parochial grievances. I have sufficient time on my hands to devote to the benefit of the State if I am required to do so.

Mr. Doney: Your idea is not a new one. It came from this side of the House two sessions ago.

Mr. WITHERS: That is so. I am prepared to say the idea is not original. However, I agree with it and I think the Government should give it consideration.

Mr. Fox: Have an alteration in Ministerial offices and so get a change!

Mr. WITHERS: No. More members of this House could be employed to help the Government in various ways. I did overlook one thing in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech. It is the question of education. I refer to it because the member for Avon was mentioned yesterday by his leader as having propounded a scheme for the raising of the school-leaving age in the inquiry held in 1938. The hon. member had a Select Committee appointed and the Leader of the Opposition yesterday gave us to understand that therein originated the idea of raising the school-leaving age, but I can remember attending conferences at the Trades Hall before I was in Parliament and also just afterwards, when Hon. J. M. Drew was Minister for Education, and this selfsame matter was placed on the platform of the Labour Party.

Mr. Doney: He did not claim it was a new idea.

Mr. WITHERS: Your leader yesterday made the claim that it was.

Mr. Doney: No.

Mr. WITHERS: The Leader of the Opposition said the idea was five years old, and that the Premier was only giving effect to the suggestion just before an election. The raising of the school age was supported by the party years ago.

Mr. Boyle: You did not support it five years ago; you voted against it.

Mr. WITHERS: Did I? I do not know whether I did or not. I am not bound to support anything brought forward by the

Opposition. I think it is a gracious act on the part of the Government that it assists to have put through some of the suggestions of the Opposition! It is a gracious act on our part to allow the Opposition to secure a majority vote for some proposals. When the matter is gone into from the economic viewpoint, it will be found that the raising of the school-leaving age will cost the State an enormous amount of money.

Mr. Doney: Of course it will.

Mr. WITHERS: The Leader of the Opposition may not be acquainted with the fact that according to what appeared in this morning's paper, the Country Party Premier of Victoria has, since an election, raised the Education Vote of that State by £500,000. Why? Because he has the finance available now and can see his way clear to increase the vote, just as the Premier of this State thinks he can see his way clear whereas it was not possible five years ago.

On motion by Mr. Perkins, debate adjourned.

COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying the personnel of sessional committees appointed by that House.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 1), £2,500,000.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

House adjourned at 5.24 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 12th August, 1943.

	PAGE
Questions: Motor transport, as to control of passenger traffic	68
High schools, as to opening dates and cost	69
Address-in-reply, fourth day	69
Adjournment, special	72

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

QUESTIONS (2).

MOTOR TRANSPORT.

As to Control of Passenger Traffic.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER asked the Chief Secretary: 1, What endeavours were made