

The Minister for Lands: Every man has a right to work. We acknowledge that.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I appeal to the Government to give all a fair go and when speaking about McKell and Mountjoy—

The Premier: They will get a fair go.

The Chief Secretary: I suppose you approve of Mountjoy's appointment?

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I approved of His Excellency's appointment and I didn't mind Mr. Ferguson's.

The Chief Secretary: You approved of Mr. Mountjoy's appointment?

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I approved of Mr. McKell. Of course I did! I think he is a wonderful man. If we had a few more McKells in this country we would be much better off.

The Chief Secretary: You win!

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: That is all I have to say at the moment. I will have an opportunity to speak again on the Estimates. I thank members for their attentive hearing.

On motion by Mr. Hill, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.55 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 13th August, 1947.

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

QUESTION.

MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT.

As to Request for Amendment.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES (on notice) asked the Minister for Mines: Why was the application of the Fremantle City Council for an amendment to the Municipal Corporations Act to enable the council to institute a contributory superannuation scheme for its employees refused?

The MINISTER replied:

The council's application to have the law amended did not meet with refusal. It is apparent that the present system of Commonwealth Social Service pensions associated with a means test does not offer much encouragement to lower paid employees to contribute substantially to superannuation, as the extra benefit derived in many cases is small. It is desired, if possible, to achieve a scheme whereby greater benefit can be ensured to contributors and it is thought this could be done if the Commonwealth would readjust its ideas on social service pensions. Accordingly inquiries are to take place in Canberra on this subject and the Attorney General has the matter in mind. The Fremantle Council was advised to this effect and the matter has been pending until the result of such inquiry can be considered.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fourth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South) [4.34]: Allow me, Mr. Deputy President, to congratulate you on your elevation to the important position you now hold. At the same time I would pay a tribute to our President, Hon. H. Seddon, and I trust he will soon be well again and back with us to resume his place in the Chair. I desire to congratulate Mr. Parker upon his appointment to ministerial office and the leadership of this House. I trust that our proceedings this session will be marked with cordiality and that all matters requiring attention will be dealt with on an equitable basis. At the same time, I desire to pay a sincere tribute to the Labour Government which held office during the war years—years that, I am safe in saying, represented the most trying period in the history of Western Australia.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Not at all. What about the 1930-33 period?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: During the war years we were in danger of invasion and all our resources had to be drawn upon in preparation for repelling the invader. Nothing of that sort had occurred in the previous history of Australia. In those days all our available building material, our seasoned timber, our machinery from the mines and elsewhere were taken from the State and

used in other parts for the protection of the Commonwealth. To replace all that was requisitioned from us will take time.

In common with the other States, we were deprived of our manpower in the agricultural, mining and other industries for the purposes of war, and thus we lost the benefit of their labour in the interest of the State. While in office the Labour Government did a wonderful job. During the course of their election campaign the present Premier and the Deputy Premier made speeches telling the people what they intended to do if returned to power. They promised to provide homes for the people, water supplies, roads, hospitals, nurses and schools. There was nothing new in that; the Labour Government had been doing everything in its power to provide the same requirements.

Hon. A. L. Loton: We do not see much for their efforts.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I know that is quite so. I have been on deputations to the various Ministers since they have been in office and took deputations to Ministers in the Labour Government with similar requests and the replies we received were always the same. We were told of the shortages of labour and materials and were promised that the works would receive attention when these requisites were available. That is the position today. I shall deal briefly with matters affecting the mining industry and members will appreciate the fact that in these days the goldmining activities represent one of the most important phases of industry in the State. In fact, goldmining is responsible for about half our revenue. I was pleased to hear the remarks of Sir Hal Colebatch with regard to the industry for he knows what it means to Western Australia. The men engaged in it are risking their lives from day to day. Not only are they subject to the occurrence of industrial diseases but their lives are endangered by possible falls of earth and so on. Whatever the present Government can do to assist the mining industry should be attended to promptly.

With regard to the Mine Workers' Relief Act, there are many loopholes in its provisions that require to be dealt with and on the 25th April the Minister for Mines received a deputation at Boulder for the purpose of discussing the provisions of that

legislation. I trust that when he gives the matter consideration, he will be liberal in his alterations to the Act which, as it stands at present, is a menace to the workers who toil in the bowels of the earth. We have in the mining industry prospectors who find the mines to be developed by the large companies. They receive, I think, 30s. to 35s. a week allowance, and I consider that amount might well be raised. The prospector has to go into the bush and has no chance whatever of subsisting on 30s. a week with the cost of living such as it is today. A stiff means test is made before he gets the allowance. One has but to glance at the application form to see how severe the test is. The applicant is required to state what money he has in the bank, whether he is a returned soldier, whether he is in receipt of a pension and so on. A person over 65 years of age cannot obtain assistance for prospecting; yet I think some of the elderly men, with their practical experience, are eminently suited to this class of work.

What is hampering the prospector today is the old style battery. These batteries have been in use ever since I have been on the Goldfields, and that is for 51 years up to last January. For the treatment of the class of dirt now obtained, a modern plant is required. I would stress the need for sulphide plants to be erected in the Yilgarn district and also at Kalgoorlie to serve these outback places. There are huge tonnages of sulphide ore available. Under the present system of crushing at the State batteries, the prospectors have to wait sometimes for months before their sands are treated and consequently they are kept waiting for their money. With a sulphide plant, the sands could be treated and the prospectors would receive their returns immediately the crushing was completed. I hope the Government will give consideration to my suggestion. There is a plant at Ravensthorpe for the treatment of copper and gold, but it is too small for the work it is now called upon to do. The Minister might have some correspondence dealing with the enlargement of that plant. A sum of £20,000 would have to be spent on enlarging it so as to make it suitable for the treatment of the copper and gold at Ravensthorpe. The copper carries, I think, five dwts. of gold.

Hon. C. G. Lafham: To the ton?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes. This gold can be extracted. There are huge quantities of ore available in that district. This was proved before World War I. The district could be made very valuable to the State if the plant there were enlarged. The Leader and the Deputy Leader of the Government have referred to the housing problem. We know that housing today is the most important matter to be dealt with in the State. Many people are at present homeless, or are living with their parents and trying to bring up families. Others are living in rooms, in hotels or in boarding-houses. It is not to the interests of the State that children should be brought up under such conditions. The housing shortage is retarding the marriage of our younger people, because they consider it useless to get married unless they have a home. So today we find large numbers of our younger people in the lounges of hotels. The Government said that it would endeavour to provide homes for two-family people, but I cannot see how that can be done. I have a family of eight waiting to get a home and therefore I do not know how it is possible to give a man and his wife a home before people with families get one.

I was in the Newdegate district a few weeks ago and heard a case in court against a woman and her daughter. They had to vacate a house. A permit was granted to them to build; the carpenters were in the district and prepared to erect the home, but what happened? Timber was not available. The timber had to be trucked to Newdegate and I suppose, owing to the trouble of putting it on trucks and one thing and another, the timber company thought, "We can supply this timber to the capital city; we can put it on a wagon there and deliver it to the builders." Consequently, people in the out-back country are not getting their fair share of materials. I wish to touch on the subject of hospitals. My district at present is well catered for in that respect, as we have four hospitals, but we work on a different system from that obtaining in other parts of the State. The equipment is supplied by the people in the district, with the help, of course, of a subsidy from the Government. The workers subscribe so much weekly towards the upkeep of the hospital. We have at present an up-to-date staff working under

a competent matron and under good conditions.

At Esperance it is practically the same; but at Kalgoorlie, as the Minister knows, we have been short of nurses. The Minister understands the position. The young girl of today does not care to enter the nursing profession, as she can receive much higher wages for work outside of the hospitals. I was talking the other night to a fully-trained nurse, a married woman. She is at present doing part-time nursing. She told me that she could work as a full-time nurse, but that if she did, her husband would be taxed as a single man and she was not prepared to allow that to happen. She now works once or twice a week at a hospital. She is rather annoyed, because she is willing to give her full time to nursing. She told me she knew of other nurses in the same position. She also told me of a dressmaker who is now working at the Hollywood Hospital and who is in receipt of £4 8s. per week and her keep as a housemaid or kitchen maid. She said "Why should we get certificates to go nursing for the sake of £5 or £5 10s. a week when these girls can receive those big wages?" There is not much encouragement.

I do not know how the Minister is going to get over it. He is in the same position that the Labour Government was in. He cannot do any more. Staff is not available and the girls are not prepared to take on nursing. Something has to be done to encourage them, and I do not know how he is going to get them. With regard to the 40-hour week, I hope that when that question is dealt with in this House members will give it favourable consideration. I see the Minister for Mines smiling, but I know that, with his kindly ways, he will give it due consideration. I certainly hope he does, because I can remember, years ago, when we had long hours. They have been reduced from time to time, and on each occasion the old story has been repeated—"We will never be able to succeed. We will go broke!" But we are still going ahead.

The Honorary Minister: When are you going to stop, at 20 hours?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: When the workers get sufficient recreation time to look after their homes. We will, with the 40-hour week, have a far healthier population. Men on pick and shovel work are doing hard manual labour. If any members have done that sort

of work, or been engaged on jobs underground, carting wood or swinging an axe, they will know that such occupations are laborious. The men should have recreation and a little time at home. Another thing about it is this, that, with plenty of recreation, we will have a chance to build up our population. By the men receiving plenty of spare time they will be fit and will be able to father a far healthier race of children. I hope members will give this matter consideration, because it is outstanding.

There is no better migrant than the Australian. If we pick the world over we can find none better. Lord Montgomery told us at the luncheon here that the Australian soldier on the battlefield stood above any other in the world. We must give the Australian everything possible. I would like to see the Government make some suggestion whereby marriages could take place at 18, 19 or 20 years of age. A young fellow today has no chance of getting any capital together to buy a home and furniture. If anyone wants to buy and furnish a three-roomed house he is up for about £1,300, and no man of the ages I have mentioned can earn the money to meet such a liability. A scheme similar to that which Mussolini introduced in Italy is required here, and that is to provide a lad with a furnished home and the land, and on production of a certain family for him to be compensated for the debt. That is the only way that we can do any good in this country. It would also mean that the young men, instead of knocking around the town, would lead useful lives. It is when young fellows are at the ages of 18, 19 or 20 that they go astray. They spend their time around the towns and in the hotels, doing those things that are not in their best interests.

I now come to our schools. The other day I was at Newdegate where I inspected the school. Today our schools are overcrowded in many places and certainly all of them on the Goldfields are. It has been said that the Labour Government was slow in doing something in this matter, but the present Government will not do any better until it can get the necessary materials. As time goes by they will become more plentiful and providing that labour also becomes available something may be done in due course. The ex-Minister for Education in the Labour Government did his best with what timber was available, and he arranged

for some aerodrome buildings on the Goldfields to be taken over and placed at the schools. I hope the present Government does not try to take credit for what was already done by that Minister. The Labour Government also did a good job with the bus system by bringing the kiddies from different districts to central schools. That has been done at Newdegate where the schoolmaster says the system is working well. The kiddies are contented and there is a good attendance there. This scheme is also in operation in the Merredin district.

In addition to what I have said, it also obviates the need for the small schools the provision of which involves large expense and, not only that, because of their isolation the best teachers do not go to them. With the big central schools we can get more teachers of a better class, and they are, as a rule, more contented because they have a decent home life. I want the Government to consider the request from the Norseman-Salmon Gums district. That area comprises the mallee district through to Esperance. The settlements there are scattered and the mallee district is very rough. The children are hampered in their education. The people there now want a boarding school or a bus system to be introduced. I hope the Minister will, if it is not already established, give consideration to this desire so that we can have these schools throughout the State. It is necessary that we should educate our children and bring them up as proper citizens. Another thing that this Government is in favour of is a water system. The Minister for Mines was at Coolgardie and Norseman on the 24th April last and at Kalgoorlie on the following day. At each of those towns the question of a flat rate for water was raised. It is only right that the people in Perth, where there is a big rainfall and plenty of underground water, should be taxed a little extra in order to give those in the outlying places, who are producing the wealth necessary to maintain the city, a bit of a go!

Hon. C. G. Latham: I agree with that.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: They are somewhat like the flea which lives on the back of the dog. The people in the cities are living on those in the back country and they, the city people, should pay something towards these things. The country residents should be given ample water. The

soil in the Eastern Goldfields district is equally as good as that in any part of the State; it will grow anything. Half the people concerned are not getting water. I was surprised that this House, opposed the Bill brought down by the previous Government, the purpose of which was to give the people in the country a better water service. Abundant water is required wherever people are settled.

Hon. C. G. Latham: It should not be made a luxury either.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: No. When it is available it should be put to the best possible use. My people were brought up when wages were low and we had in those days to watch our water supply very carefully. How can families exist if they have to be brought up when there is insufficient water to go round? Both railways and water supplies should be installed in the country areas so that those parts may be developed, and on such a basis that they are not provided for the purpose of making profits. At Newdegate the water question also cropped up. The people there considered that the Government should establish a huge dam. There was a contractor in the district who was prepared to put that dam down with the very extensive plant that he had. I do not know whether his request has been sent to the Government, but I appeal to it to consider the matter, because I understand that if this contractor sinks the big dam he is prepared to use his plant for the purpose of putting down smaller dams on settlers' properties at a low figure.

The Honorary Minister: How much a yard does he charge?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I do not know, but I can get the information for the Honorary Minister. Members of this Chamber who come from farming districts know how important it is to have a good water supply. In many instances the settlers have to depend for their water on their own dams. Perhaps some of the farmers are on poor land and cannot afford to put down dams. In other instances the older people had to do without their sons, who had gone to the war, and they found it impossible to maintain their dams in proper condition. Generally they found the burden on their shoulders too heavy to carry.

The question of housing for farmers also needs a lot of consideration. Many of the older settlers were looking after their properties while their sons went to the war. When the lads returned many of them went back to their parents, but when they found they were unable to obtain the materials required for the construction of decent homes on these properties, they came to Perth and found work. The old people cannot get them back because they will not leave the amenities that are enjoyed in the metropolitan area. It is difficult to persuade them to leave the city and go back to the country under present conditions. However, if the Government would watch the outback centres a little more than it does, instead of looking after the metropolitan area to such an extent, it would be doing a good job.

Another way in which these people are handicapped is in connection with rail transport. I have written to the Commissioner on this question. A certain man in the district ordered five trucks so that he might send about 500 lambs to market. He ordered the trucks three weeks ahead and brought his stock into the siding and put them into the yards. When he arrived with his stock he was told that the trucks had been given to someone else nearer the city, and he had to take his lambs home again. He told me he had lost between £100 and £120 owing to the fall in the market price and the loss of condition in the stock. By the time he could get his lambs back to the railway they would be oversize.

I suggest that in cases where the Government cannot provide rail transport it should provide road transport. It may be there is a shortage of a particular kind of rollingstock. When the last Government was in office it set aside a large sum of money for the construction of additional rollingstock. I have the figures as to the different classes of wagons that were to be built. It was the same thing over again. Tradesmen were not available in sufficient numbers and progress was slow. I hope that in future rollingstock will be found to meet all requirements.

I now come to Ravensthorpe and Hope-toun. The road between those places was constructed and is maintained by the local authorities. What with the long stretches and the small population, the cost to the local authorities of maintaining the road is

very heavy. At Hopetoun there is a big fishing industry which is of great value to the State. The only means of transport for that industry is by road. I should like to see the Government take it over as a main road. I think some assistance has been rendered to the local authorities by the Government, but they are of opinion it should be made a main road and that it would better serve the purpose for which it was constructed.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Is it not a main road between Norseman and Ravensthorpe?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: No, but some assistance is given by the Government. Esperance is another important centre. There are thousands of acres of valuable land in the district and the rainfall is from 18 to 20 inches. Most of the land is undeveloped. At a local conference of the Ravensthorpe and Esperance people on the 26th July, the request was made to the Minister for Railways that the road should be put into order for traffic. There is annually a big number of tourists who want to visit this centre and in normal times it is estimated that 700 people a year go there. Through that district, there is a short cut from the Goldfields to Perth. It is a fine place to go to and it would be of great advantage to our citizens if that country were opened up. One can grow anything there. If the road could be made fit for traffic it would be excellent for the district. Already it is fairly good except for 10 or 11 miles. The trouble is that it has developed a large crown—a relic of the days of horse-drawn vehicles—and only a certain type of car can travel over it. If the request that has been made could be granted it would be a good thing for the township.

The people at Esperance are supplied with water from the railway dam. That is all right when only the ordinary population is residing there, but it is far from all right when the population increases as a result of an influx of tourists. There are many springs around the district. The Government dams are turned off when the population increases and people have to draw on wells, which is not a suitable way of obtaining water. The Minister for Water Supply was asked to send an engineer who could talk over the schemes that the local people had in mind. Although the Government has stated that it is prepared to help people in the outback

areas and assist them in every possible way, the Minister turned down the proposal. All that was required was that an engineer should be sent down to discuss the water supply suggestions. It is thought that water could be conveyed from springs that are found within a reasonable distance from Esperance.

I understand from the local people that one spring would supply Esperance all the year round with sufficient water for everybody. As I have said the request was turned down. I think the Minister stated that owing to shortage of staff or to the cost involved it was not possible to accede to the request. I may say that the local authority is very hostile over the whole business, and feels that it is being hampered through the neglect on the part of the Government to look into this matter. Esperance is also suffering from lack of homes. It is a centre that is far removed from the sources of supply and there is also the huge freight that has to be paid to bring materials from Perth. Many permits for homes have been turned down. I recognise that the Government can only do what the previous Government did, owing to the shortage of materials and other difficulties, but as time goes on I trust it will say "When we can do so we will give you what you want."

Hon. C. G. Latham: They make good cement bricks there!

Hon. G. BENNETTS: The cement position is as bad as the timber position. I now come to Norseman, which is the second biggest mining centre outside the Golden Mile. It was a shock to the Minister for Railways and to Mr. Roche when they visited Norseman to see the size of the place. They both said they had not realised it was such an important centre. Very few members of this Chamber know much about this State as a result of their travels. In order that justice may be done to the whole of the State, during recess perhaps it would be possible to arrange a sort of Reso tour for members of Parliament so they might become conversant with all parts of Western Australia.

The Honorary Minister: You have a free pass. Why should there be a tour of members?

Hon. G. Fraser: It would be better that the Government should arrange such trips.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: That is what we want. While stressing the value of the gold-mining industry, I wish to point out that the people of Norseman cannot get materials for home building. I consider that the Housing Commission should be more liberal to such centres than it is to the capital city. We are finding it very difficult to get men to go to those places. The amenities are few and if it were not that the beer flows so freely, people would not go there. One of the main difficulties at Norseman is the price of water. The residents were paying 10s. per thousand gallons until last year when they received a slight reduction. I believe they are now paying between 8s. 6d. and 9s. 6d. per thousand gallons. It is necessary to have a plentiful water supply in such a town because the men working in the mines, by the very nature of their tasks, need a lot of water. Working underground, as so many of them do, and in dusty places, they need a lot of water for bathing. The homes need more washing; linen and clothing require more washing, and all these requirements mean extra consumption. The people right through those districts consider that something should be done to provide for a flat rate for water throughout the State, and I agree with them.

The people of Norseman submitted a request to the Minister that a Diesel coach service should be provided for the district. The distance from Esperance to Kalgoorlie is 240 miles, and a steam train takes 21 hours to do the journey. Requests for such a service have been made to the last three Ministers for Railways, and Mr. Seward has undertaken to see whether a Diesel coach can be put on. Such a service would be of considerable help to the people who have to make long railway journeys. The local road board has a plan for the construction of metal roads in the town. Water for roadmaking is charged for at present at the rate of 5s. per thousand gallons. This will impose a heavy financial burden on the road board, which is requesting the Government to allow a rebate on the price of water used for roadmaking in order that the roads of the town may be put into proper condition. I hope the Government will see its way clear to grant that request.

Coolgardie is another goldmining centre. The Minister for Mines paid it a visit on the 24th April and met the prospectors and

townspeople, who were kind enough to offer really good entertainment and plenty of liquid refreshment in the good old Goldfields style, and made the Minister and his party very welcome. The residents are hoping that the kind smiles of the Minister were an indication that he intended to do something for them. Requests were also made regarding State batteries, roads and the price of water for that district. So far, we have not heard of any result. Of course, we cannot blame the Minister, who is in the same position as was his predecessor. Still I hope that consideration will be given to the question of providing a sulphide ore treatment plant there, another question which was brought under notice of the Minister, as well as assistance for the mine and a better service on the railway.

At Southern Cross, similar requests were submitted. There is a huge deposit of sulphide ore at Southern Cross, and, if a treatment plant is located there, it will be of great help to the district. Southern Cross, of course, is known to everybody because of its great value to the State. We want the Government to assist us to link up the road between Southern Cross and Coolgardie, so that we shall then have a good highway right through to Perth. During the railway strike, that road was used by the transport service and everyone was convinced of the need for bituminising the surface. The road is under construction at present and I hope that the work will be speeded up and done thoroughly. The mining industry there, of course, is the main source of revenue.

During the war, the railways, in my opinion, did a magnificent job, especially considering the rollingstock at its disposal—engines, carriages and wagons. The railwaymen gave remarkable service. They had to battle along against great odds, and when I saw the way they transhipped goods from one gauge to another, I could well appreciate their work. Although we criticise the railways, we ought to give credit to them for the way traffic was handled during the war years. A fairly good job is still being done, but only fairly good. Many of the workers, such as train crews, are discontented.

A lot of trouble is simmering amongst those men because there is no co-operation between the departmental heads and the workers. The crew that used to travel on the train from Perth to Kalgoorlie and ap-

pear neat and clean before the passengers are now taken from the train at Merredin. Although they live in Perth, their home station is classified as Merredin. When they reach Merredin, they are taken off the train and put on to the unloading of trucks and other porter jobs. Then, when they appear again before the passengers, their clothes are dirty and untidy, and they feel discontented because they cannot keep themselves clean, as they would like to do. Last week the signalbox interlocking gear at Southern Cross was taken out and the result is that the conductors have been detailed to do extra work when the train arrives at Southern Cross on the way to Kalgoorlie. Work such as refuelling is necessary, and the conductor has to do it.

Hon. C. G. Latham: He does not have to clean the engine.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: No, but he has to hold the points to let the train through. They are kangaroo points that must be held by hand. No matter how bad the weather may be, these men have to go out and do that duty. The other day, when I was on the train, heavy rain was falling, and the conductor returned from doing points duty, not only dirty, but also wet through. There were passengers on the train who wanted attention, and yet he had to go away and look after the shunting.

Arrangements of that sort make men discontented. Younger men are now employed on this work, but they can go elsewhere and get other employment. They are competent to do other work for the department and they feel discontented that they are compelled to do such duties as I have mentioned. A young fellow told me the other day that, if conditions are not altered, he intends to leave and get work elsewhere. Many of these men have had to pass examinations before they could get their jobs, and if they are lost to the department, it will take a long time to get others to replace them. There is so much red tape about the department and no co-operation on the part of the heads. It is up to the Commissioner and the heads of his departments to study their employees a little more.

According to the "Kalgoorlie Miner" of the 24th July, the Minister for Railways, while at Coolgardie, said that since his Government had been in power, it had ordered 60 engines. I think that number must be

a mistake because the previous Government called for tenders, and I think the number was 25 "P" class engines. To imply that the present Government, by waving a wand, has been able to get so many engines quick and lively is misleading. I do not know when the Government will get the engines it has ordered. The previous Government could not get them; it was necessary to wait for them to be built. At the same meeting, the Minister said that the previous Government was responsible for the faults in the Railway Department. Members know as well as I do that the Labour Government last year endeavoured to get Parliament to pass a Bill to operate the railways on a different system so that the Commissioner would not have so much control and the Government so little. Had that measure been passed, and had a board been set up to manage the railways, we might have got some improvement.

There are many anomalies in the railways, but much of the trouble is due to a shortage of rollingstock, while lack of co-operation between the heads and employees is also partly responsible. That was my experience, at any rate. Men who had never coupled an engine to a train or done any shunting were chosen for office jobs when vacancies occurred. The Commissioner will not make any attempt to improve matters. He just tries to harass the men and they become discontented, with the result that the public suffers. I hope the Commissioner will take notice of those circumstances. Then we have the Garratt engines which members know are being reconditioned. Even when they have been attended to, however, they will be like a bally on the breast. They will be a continuous slug on the taxpayers of this State. I say that because the material in the engines is not good enough to enable them to be put into any shape. They will not stand up to the wear and tear.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: They do too much work; that is the trouble.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: No, they do not. I can get the hon. member all the evidence he wants, and it will come from practical men. I was talking to one recently—a driver—and can give the hon. member any information he needs. The engines are pulling a good load on the Norseman-Esperance line, but the upkeep is terribly high; and after about twelve months it would pay the Government to put another engine

on. I was at Kalgoorlie only six weeks ago and one came out of the yard to go on traffic and the rods were bent. That is an indication of the flimsy material.

Hon. W. R. Hall: Too fast off the mark!

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I do not think the Government is to blame for the engines, but the engineer who recommended their purchase made a mistake. They were built to do a war job and in that connection rendered good service; but instead of their being used in peacetime it would have paid the Government to run them over the dead-end at Fremantle into the sea. It might have saved the taxpayers a lot of money.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Nonsense!

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I am speaking of the experience of practical men against that of the hon. member, who does not know anything about the subject.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: You do not appear to know too much.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Don't I! I could take the hon. member to practical men and get him all the evidence he wants. I have been on the engines myself.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Are they not used in Africa?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: They may be. We put up a wonderful job in this State with the old Garratt but the metal used in the construction of these engines is wartime material and it is of very poor quality.

Hon. C. G. Latham: It is more a question of material, then, than of class?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: The class is all right; it is the material. With adjustments, the class of engine would be satisfactory but the material is not of good quality. Since the present Government has been in power quite a lot of the Ministers have travelled round the country. The Honorary Minister, Mrs. Cardell-Oliver, went to Kalgoorlie and visited our schools. We have seen a good deal in the papers of what the good lady is doing for the State. I hope she will be able to do some good, but all that she is doing, or trying to do, is what the previous Government had already done. I attended various meetings at which she spoke and she said she would assist in getting school buildings and all that sort of thing and in persuading the Eastern States to hurry goods to Western Australia.

I do not know whether she has accomplished anything, but I think the commodities will arrive just as quickly as if she had never gone to the Eastern States. I cannot see the stevedores or the people loading stuff—

Hon. C. G. Latham: You mean that the waterside workers would not do any more?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: The Commonwealth Labour Government has the matter in hand and is doing as good a job as it can. If it cannot achieve anything, I do not think the good lady is likely to hurry matters up.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Sex appeal is a great attraction!

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Since the first job she accomplished was mentioned in the paper, the good lady had 100 motor bodies brought to Western Australia. They came over the Commonwealth railway line. At the time, there was a shortage of coal and goods trains were cancelled; but 100 motor bodies arrived here, which are not of much use to the working class. It was mentioned that the Honorary Minister would accelerate the delivery of commodities required for the building of homes, but the first things she had brought over were motor bodies. The result was that a railway truck capable of conveying a load of 37 tons, carried instead three motor bodies of a weight of 21 cwt.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Were other goods available for putting on those trucks?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes. The transport of those goods was cancelled on account of a shortage of coal, but motor bodies were brought over. Trucks for the haulage of wheat and fertiliser for the farmers were in short demand, yet several of those GC trucks, each of which will take 10 tons of commodities, carried one of those motor bodies from Kalgoorlie down to Perth. There is not much reason to boom the Honorary Minister so far as bringing materials for homes to this State is concerned.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Do you know that the last ship carrying cargo to this State came on the 12th June and that nothing had left the Eastern States since?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I do not know about that.

Hon. G. Fraser: Her mission was not successful then?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: No. I think that she got her information from the shipping companies at Fremantle and then had it put in the paper, because only a fortnight ago she made mention of a few hundred towels being available at the shops. A man in one of our biggest business firms told me that people came from different parts of the country to obtain these towels, but there was not one in the place and no sign of their coming. Yet the Minister said she had had word that they were available. She must have had advice from the shipping companies. That is all I have to say on the Address-in-reply, and I support the motion.

HON. H. TUCKEY (South-West) [5.40]: I desire to congratulate you, Sir, on your election, and trust that the President will soon be completely restored to health. We meet in rather different circumstances from those that have prevailed for a long time, because this is the first occasion during the 13 years that I have been in Parliament that we have had a change of Government. In this House we have two Ministers representing the new Administration. I congratulate Mr. Parker, who has been elected Leader of the House, and Mr. Wood, who has been chosen as Honorary Minister. If the reports I have received when travelling around various centres in the past two or three months are any guide, I would say that instead of the new Government going out of office at the end of six months—

Hon. E. M. Heenan: It will be twelve months!

Hon. H. TUCKEY —if it can maintain its present support it will be in office at the end of six years. I feel sure it has made a very good start and there is no reason to think, or believe, that it will fall down on its job. I hope it will be successful at any rate for the first three or four years, so that it will have an opportunity to establish its policy.

Hon. G. Fraser: Give us something about the Government's good start!

Hon. H. TUCKEY: The hon. member will hear quite a lot about that as time goes on. In spite of the very high prices

being received for commodities at present, I consider that the country is facing serious economic possibilities. No-one can say what will be the outcome of Britain's financial difficulties. In my opinion it is a first essential for Britain to be prosperous, if the Dominions are to enjoy prosperity. The Prime Minister and others have been advocating a stepping-up of production. I do not think that Australia can make any real contribution to the alleviation of Britain's present difficulties while thousands of workers are being incited to hold up trade and industry in this country. The metal trades strike alone cost Australia millions of pounds.

Scores of businessmen have come from overseas and visited the Eastern States in search of goods but, as a consequence of these strikes, they have had to return empty-handed. That Australia in such circumstances should lose a golden opportunity to establish markets for her secondary industries is a very bad state of affairs. Apart from the loss in this connection, there has been a great shortage of supplies for our own market. People have not been able to buy essential goods. More particularly have they been unable to buy machinery such as tractors and heavy plant. Local authorities—and even the Government—have been seriously handicapped through not having the necessary plant to carry out essential works. This is all contributing to lack of production because it means that if these works are not put in hand, there will be a detrimental effect on other activities as well. People are becoming tired of trying to plan ahead because of the present position. The heavy burden of taxation and the financial and other difficulties caused by strikes create considerable obstacles to initiative and progress. I do not know how long this kind of thing is to be tolerated; but it seems to me that unless we can bring about a return to constitutional government, there is very little hope of remedying the position.

Today we know that a few men in some secondary industries control them and there is no authority—or there has not been for some time past—to do anything about it. One of the worst actions in connection with industrial strife for a long time was the recent determination of the waterside workers to say what products shall be ex-

ported from or imported into the Commonwealth. I quite agree with the remarks of Sir Hal Colebatch when he complained about this particular matter. It is not long since these people would not allow ships to call at North-West ports because there were Indonesians employed on the vessels. The waterside workers would rather see people in North-West centres short of food and provisions than allow the ships to call under those circumstances. It is a strange policy. One day they do their worst against the Indonesians and the next day their worst against this country in support of the Indonesians. I hope that in the course of time we will have a change in Commonwealth Government spheres, which might do something towards straightening out this state of affairs.

Hon. G. Fraser: Like they straightened out the war effort.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: I agree with the statement, made yesterday, that it is indeed bad to see the white man walking out of the Asiatic countries. We must look ahead, and in doing so I believe that our position is not all that it might be. The only bright spot is that we have some good friends in America, but the position has been going against Australia for a long time past. We have trouble in India and Burma, and we know that part of China is being over-run by Communists. When we look ahead the outlook is not bright. Strikes have cost the country a great loss of trade. I am pleased that the State Government has been exporting a certain amount of our timber, though it could have been absorbed locally.

Undoubtedly the exporting of that timber has contributed to some extent to the shortage of material in this State, but the Government had an eye to business and knew that it was necessary to maintain this valuable trade for later on, when times return to normal. Of course, the export price is greater than the local price, which is of great help to the industry. No doubt later on when the local market is better supplied and more timber is available for export, this State will be extremely glad of that export trade. Had it been possible for other industries to be treated similarly, and had we been able to accept orders from oversea business people, thus establishing markets, it is hard to say how beneficial such a course would have been to Australia in times to come. I

will now touch on certain matters concerning the South-West.

I understand it is the intention of the Government to take up the question of the Bunbury harbour, a matter that has worried the people of that area for many years, as well as various Governments. I believe some progress has been made and it is now the intention of the Government to go into the matter in an endeavour to get that work started. I do not know much about the planning of it, but if the first part of the scheme could be put in hand, that would give the people of the Bunbury district a feeling of relief, and I think they would then be satisfied to wait some time for the larger job to be completed. As things are, the present position is a great drawback to the town and I hope the Government at long last will be able to do something to improve the position there.

I come next to the matter of the Busselton jetty. Busselton is another small shipping port, not as large as Bunbury, though it handles a good deal of shipping in fine weather. The difficulty is that for about four months in the year ships do not call there owing to the danger of being caught by rough weather. The jetty runs north and south and ships are therefore obliged to tie up facing north and south and, in the winter months, run the risk of being caught by the north-westerly and westerly gales, as it is from those directions that the heavy weather comes in that area during the winter. If a ship is caught tied up under those circumstances it is not easy for it to clear the jetty and get under way. It is a dangerous operation and the masters of vessels will not run such a risk.

For about four months of the year there is therefore no shipping at Busselton, though during the summer-time a considerable quantity of cargo is handled and a number of waterside workers have their families living in the town. Owing to the recent lack of waterside work at Busselton, I understand that three of the lumpers have had to leave their families there and seek employment at Fremantle. That is not desirable, as we should decentralise to the greatest possible extent and keep a large proportion of our people in the country areas. I do not know whether those workers will bring their families to Fremantle, but I think it would be in the best interests of the people of Busselton if that position

could be remedied. I believe all that is required is a small extension to the jetty to enable ships to tie up during the winter months facing east and west, so that they may face into the weather.

Anyone knowing much about shipping will understand that it is a simple matter to get a ship away from a wharf in heavy weather if it is facing the elements, though it is quite a different matter when the weather hits the ship broadside on. If that addition could be made to the Busselton jetty, so that ships could load during winter months, there would be some trade at the port all the year round. It would be helpful indeed to the sawmillers and to the tradespeople of Busselton as well as to the waterside workers. I think the Government should communicate with the Shipping Association in an endeavour to get further information on that point. If that were done I believe the reply would be on the lines of what I have recommended. I hope the Government will attempt to do something in the matter.

I will deal next with my home town, Mandurah. The outlet of the Murray River is the outlet for the Serpentine and Harvey Rivers also. Within that area there are hundreds of miles of drains. On the Peel Estate alone about a million pounds was spent on drainage, and then there is the Pinjarra area, Coolup, and so on draining into the Peel Inlet. Because of the importance of the fishing industry and of the drainage system, it is time the Government did something to complete the proposed work in that area. There has been a bar there for many years and some thousands of pounds have been expended, but because the job has not been completed the work done so far is not effective. It does not do much good. While I am not altogether in accord with the proposal of the engineers to carry out the work, that does not matter, as the Government is finding the money and, if mistakes are made, that is the concern of the Government.

Before the new scheme is proceeded with, further investigations might be made in order to do the best possible job. I have not only my own local experience on which to go, but that of my people before me. They were connected with shipping there in bygone years, and in some cases local experience is helpful. From my knowledge of the position, I think the Government

should send its best advisers there to make a further investigation on the spot. Mandurah could be developed as a fishing port. The inland fisheries today have almost gone by the board owing to the bad policy carried out by successive Governments over the years. Most of our rivers today are depleted of fish stocks. Fish can be caught outside Mandurah and the fishing boats brought in there to forward their fish to market, but with the present state of the bar many boats will not come in, as the owners do not know whether they would be able to cross the bar into the river. That aspect of the problem could be examined as well as the inland system and the drainage of the districts I have mentioned.

The Government has also promised to deal with the Glen Iris drainage system near Bunbury. In that area there is a large tract of low-lying country that has been well developed and is ideal for mixed farming and the growing of vegetables. Some of the people there have been practically ruined in the last three seasons owing to flooding. Some years ago the Government built levies to carry the water away. The work was not properly completed and, even if it had been completed, the levies would not have been large enough to carry the volume of water coming down the Preston River during the last two or three years. In 1946 there was from 1 foot to 2 feet of water all over that land and in some cases it actually came into the houses. One vegetable grower lost the whole of his crop, which was covered with water for some days. That sort of thing is a serious matter for such people and I hope the Government will endeavour to remedy the position this season. It is a big job and, while the drainage is being extended, the inland districts are being further drained, which again adds to the volume of water to be handled. Whatever is now undertaken must be not only to carry off the present volume of water, but that which is likely to come down in the future.

In one case a large brook had been snagged and straightened to let the water through quickly, and as soon as that had been done the brook increased in size by about 200 per cent. and all the silt went down towards the estuary, helping to prevent the flow of water. A great deal of work is necessary to make sufficient room for the water to get away in years to come.

I hope steps will be taken to get that work done in the near future. It should be done during the summer months so that next winter the farmers of that area need not worry about a recurrence of the flooding which they have suffered in recent years. Transport is another problem in my area. What is desired by the people is faster transport. I know that the Government intends to put on buses in the near future, but the people think that some of the roads will not meet the requirements of the various districts. I hope that when the bus service is established the Government will give consideration to the outlying centres.

Recently "The West Australian" made arrangement for newspapers to be taken from the midnight train and delivered to people in outlying areas by breakfast time. That is a wonderful service and has earned the gratitude and good feeling of the people served. They are proud of the fact that they can get their paper at breakfast time. If newspapers can be delivered in that way, why not mails and passengers as well? I do not suggest that provision should be made for passengers at present by means of such a transport service, because the existing population does not warrant it. But I trust it will not be long before mails are delivered as promptly as newspapers are today. By that means people would be able to get their correspondence by breakfast time and it would make a great difference to those living in the outlying districts if they had the advantage of such a service.

On two or three occasions in this House I have drawn attention to the necessity of widening some of our main thoroughfares. The principal roads throughout the State are altogether too narrow. I have never been able to understand why some notice has not been taken of what I regard as an important matter such as this. We have millions of acres in Western Australia and it is no good saying that land is not available for resumption so that roads could be widened where necessary. The width of a chain only is altogether too narrow for a road in these days of fast moving traffic. I would instance the Busselton Highway through to Augusta, which represents 60 miles of beautiful road but it is only a chain wide, which is too narrow.

A few weeks ago a farmer was driving his sheep along the road and had his small child with him. At one stage he put the

child down to let it have a run round and just at that time a motorist came along. The sheep on the road apparently caused some confusion and the driver did not see the child, with the result that he ran over it and killed it in front of the father's eyes. I have no doubt that the narrowness of the roadway contributed to that unfortunate occurrence. Naturally I do not suggest that it furnishes a complete explanation of the accident, but it can easily be that on a road that is too narrow, sheep travelling over it would cause too much congestion and confusion when a motorist approached the flock, thereby leading to accidents.

There are other roads such as that between Pinjarra and Mandurah. In that part there are thousands of acres of coastal country that are used extensively by farmers for grazing purposes in conjunction with their holdings further inland. As members understand the coastal country cannot be used exclusively because stock run on it become "coasty" and have to be transferred to clay areas two or three times a year. The only way stock can be shifted there is by using one road, which is a chain wide and is far too narrow for such a purpose. The result is that from time to time sheep are killed there. Some people seem to be under the impression that if stock are on a road they will move aside to give traffic a safe passage. Stock do not move aside like that, with the result that a motorist may be right on top of the sheep or cattle before he realises the position and he cannot stop the car quickly enough to prevent some of the animals being killed. Such roads could easily be extended another half chain if not a full chain in width.

Certainly, main roads should not be less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ chains wide. I would instance the position regarding the Canning Highway. When I entered Parliament there was very little development in the areas traversed by that road. There has been much development since, and yet most of that highway today is only a chain wide which is not wide enough. We must look ahead in a country such as Western Australia and visualise the time when the population will be ten times as great as it is today. We will not always have the comparatively few motor vehicles we see on the roads today. The time will come when the number on the roads will be such that there will be great need for wider thoroughfares.

Hon. G. Fraser: Are you aware that the Minister who built the Canning Highway was nearly bounded out of public life because he did so?

Hon. H. TUCKEY: The fact is that such a main road should be much wider than it is today. I trust the Government will give some attention to the provision of better roads in the country areas and that the roads will be constructed much wider than they are at present, whatever the cost may be. I would also ask the Government to take some notice of what is going on in the soldier settlement districts. I understand that complaints are being voiced about the waste of money. I would not mention the fact were it not that I feel that in some respects there is room for such complaints. Perhaps the Government could check up on the position and ascertain what is happening. One group foreman in the Pemberton area told me that the situation today was very much like it was when the old group settlement scheme was under way. I do not know what there is in that; but if it is correct, it is not very encouraging. I hope the Government will get its expert officers and others associated with the work to check up on the position.

Hon. G. Bennetts: There is a lot of trouble on account of the time taken to secure an allotment.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: I believe that is quite understandable because they have to wait for the approval of the Commonwealth Government. My reference is to the work that is actually going on. The complaint is on account of the cost and the carrying out of work that is unnecessary, which occasions great expense. Another small matter I desire to refer to has reference to the Traffic Act. I trust that during this session we will make some effort to deal with the glaring headlights.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. H. TUCKEY: The present Act is not satisfactory and the regulations must be altered. If the existing regulations are complied with, the headlight is a positive menace not only to motorists but to the general public. If the law is carried out in that respect the lights are not satisfactory at all for driving on country roads. They are all right in the city with the street lamps providing illumination, but in the country

districts the high beam is too low to enable the motorist to see what is ahead of him.

The remedy is for the beam to be higher and when cars approach each other the drivers should switch to the low beam. Any motorists failing to do so should be regarded as guilty of an offence. I cannot see any difficulty in the way of remedying the position. As a matter of fact, at present very few people comply with existing regulations and, without mentioning any names, I know that Ministers of the Crown have not always done so. It is entirely wrong for men to be forced to do something that does not comply with the law in such a matter. If motorists were compelled to switch to a low beam when approaching each other, the difficulty would be overcome.

Hon. G. Fraser: A driver would have a constant job on the road between Perth and Fremantle.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: It is better that such should be so than that the existing condition of affairs should continue.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Motorists on the road between Perth and Fremantle would use the low beam.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: Another matter I shall refer to concerns a problem of importance to the State. I allude to the question of noxious weeds. I have mentioned the subject before and do so again because little has been done in the past. We have some poison weeds that are spreading, particularly in the South-West, and if steps are not taken to deal with the trouble the noxious weeds will prove a great drawback to graziers and others. In my opinion, the local authorities are to blame to a certain extent, but the Government should certainly take some action to see that the trouble is dealt with. I have in mind particularly the Cape Tulip, which is a very troublesome weed and is spreading rapidly. Many people are unaware of the dangers attached to it and do not know that it is poisonous. The growth of the tulip will soon be so prolific that it will be impossible to eradicate the weed.

Hon. G. Bennetts: The Bathurst Burr is bad on the Goldfields and was introduced through traffic over the Trans-train.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: I commend the Minister upon the way he has tackled the question of T.B. in dairy cattle. In spite of the losses that must be incurred by many

dairymen, they are beginning to realise that the Minister and the Milk Board are on the right track and are now supporting them. A very well attended meeting was held at Pinjarra a little time back and before the meeting the dairymen were inclined to be hostile. By the time the meeting was ended they were 100 per cent. behind the Minister. They realise that the cleansing of the herds and the task of making them free of T.B. must be carried out, and the sooner the better.

However, the Government would be wise if it did not try to rush the work through too quickly. The trouble has been with us for years and it will be a very difficult matter to replace the cattle that will have to be condemned. If the department were to see that the dairy heifers were not slaughtered it would be a good idea because they will be required to take the place of the cattle that will be condemned and destroyed. There is today a shortage of dairy cattle and the testing of herds for tuberculosis has only just started. It has been commenced in the metropolitan areas and later on will have to be carried out in the country districts. By that time the serious shortage of dairy stock to replace the condemned and slaughtered animals will be emphasised. In the circumstances, if the dairy type of heifer could be preserved for replacement purposes it would be a step in the right direction. Perhaps the Government will give some thought to that subject. I have pleasure in supporting the motion.

On motion by Hon. E. M. Heenan, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday next.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 6.14 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 13th August, 1947.

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

QUESTIONS.

RAILWAYS.

As to Return of A.S.G. Engines to Traffic, etc.

Mr. MARSHALL (on notice) asked the Minister for Railways:

1, What was the total number of A.S.G. engines actually in traffic between the period of the 31st August and the 31st December, 1946?

2, What is the anticipated number of A.S.G. engines which will be in traffic by the 31st December, 1947?

3, What is the total anticipated number of engines which will be constructed at Midland Junction between the period of the 1st January to the 31st December, 1947?

The MINISTER replied:

1, 8.

2, 15.

3, 5.

COST OF LIVING.

As to Elimination of Unnecessary Distribution Charges.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE (on notice) asked the Minister for Education:

1, In "The West Australian" of the 24th January, 1947, the Minister for Education is reported to have said, "There are some