

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 9th April, 1942.

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

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

- 1, Broome Tramway Extension.
- 2, Road Districts Act Amendment (No. 3).
- 3, Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions).
- 4, Lotteries (Control) Act Amendment.
- 5, Fire Brigades Act Amendment.
- 6, Rights in Water and Irrigation Act Amendment.
- 7, Plant Diseases (Registration Fees).
- 8, Main Roads Act (Funds Appropriation) (No. 2).
- 9, Stamp Act Amendment.
- 10, Workers' Compensation Act Amendment.
- 11, Reserves (No. 2).
- 12, Road Closure.
- 13, Loan (£916,000).
- 14, Industries Assistance Act Continuance.
- 15, Potato Growers Licensing.
- 16, Land Drainage Act Amendment.
- 17, Metropolitan Market Act Amendment.
- 18, Workers' Homes Act Amendment.
- 19, Licensing (Provisional Certificate).
- 20, Appropriation.
- 21, Fruit Growing Industry (Trust Fund).
- 22, Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act Amendment.
- 23, Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment.
- 24, Administration Act Amendment (No. 1).
- 25, Death Duties (Taxing) Act Amendment.
- 26, Members of Parliament Fund.
- 27, Administration Act Amendment (No. 2).
- 28, Child Welfare Act Amendment.

29, Legislative Council (Postponement of Election).

30, Legislative Assembly Duration and General Election Postponement.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

The Premier and the State's War Effort.

THE PREMIER (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [4.38]: I ask leave of the House to make a statement.

Mr. SPEAKER: Is it the wish of members that the Premier shall have leave to make a statement? As there is no dissentient voice, leave is granted.

The PREMIER: As members are aware, under the Australian system of government, matters of military importance and those dealing with the defence of the Commonwealth and foreign affairs are the responsibility of the Federal Government and the Federal Parliament. Many matters dealing with what is known as civil defence and internal law and order have been accepted by the States as their responsibility and as an important contribution to the war effort of the nation. In all these matters the State Government is working in the closest co-operation with the Commonwealth Government. Immediately on the outbreak of war we made it clear that our greatest concern would be to work hand in glove with the Commonwealth Government in everything required for the defence of the nation. We made it clear that our greatest concern was to be of the utmost assistance to the nation, and it is unnecessary for me to say that that sentiment had the unanimous endorsement of every member of this Chamber. That policy has been followed consistently wherever possible during the course of the 2½ years the war has been continuing. We have never deviated from that policy in any way; in fact, we have sought every possible opportunity to give effect to it to the fullest extent.

It may well be said that the greatest part of my time and of the time of other Ministers is at present occupied in examining, and putting into force, proposals which have been the subject of consultation between ourselves and the Commonwealth Government. I shall refer later to the various means which have been adopted to ensure the closest association with

the Commonwealth Government, but at this stage I wish merely to stress how important it is that this co-operation should be maintained. In fact, merely for curiosity, I counted up how many letters addressed to me by the Federal Government had been received by me in a single day. I found that there were no less than 25 letters. Some of these had to be attended to by myself, and others distributed to other Ministers for attention and for the taking of suitable action. I want to stress that most of these matters have to be dealt with almost on the spot. It is no use delaying for three or four days or perhaps a week to get replies through the usual procedure between Ministers and Government departments. I am pleased to be able to say that the whole of the business has been carried out in a very expeditious manner, and that delays have been avoided to a large extent.

In passing I may mention that when it was decided that in the interests of the people in the Kimberleys and the Kimberley ports it was necessary for the women and children to be evacuated, in the course of a few days we had aeroplanes and other means of transport assembled, without any outsider having knowledge of it, at the various places prior to the danger period being encountered. The utmost expedition, I emphasise, has been applied in the case of everything that it was desired to do. That is one of the reasons why this Parliament has not been called together earlier. The Government has thought that rather than deal with legislative matters which might unduly delay the course of events, more particularly from this time onward, when prompt decisions must be made and certain courses of action decided upon speedily, and the whole of the business concluded without delay, the Government should carry on with that policy; and therefore we are not desirous of introducing any legislative programme whatever at this stage. We consider that the better course is to give members an opportunity to discuss anything that may arise out of the present period of emergency. When that period is concluded—and I hope it will not take very long—the work of the Government in expediting and deciding important matters of policy will be continued to the benefit of the war effort. We shall not therefore

submit any legislation of any type or kind at the present juncture, during what I hope will be a small number of sittings.

It is also the Government's desire that the sittings of Parliament should not drag on interminably. In justification of that I may mention that even in the Federal Parliament, which has to deal with matters of vital urgency, sittings recently have lasted only for a day or two. It is hoped, therefore, that this meeting of the Western Australian Parliament will be concluded next week. The Federal Parliament, faced with matters of vital urgency and all-important decisions, has sittings which extend over only two or three or four days, during which very little legislation is introduced apart from taxation measures and Supply Bills and other matters which must be dealt with according to Parliamentary procedure. It is to be borne in mind, too, that members of the Federal Parliament are summoned from all corners of Australia, over distances of thousands of miles occasionally, and that they sit for only three or four days, after which Commonwealth Ministers are released from attendance in the Federal Houses and thus enabled to get on with the prosecution of the war. In the circumstances the Government of Western Australia thinks it undesirable to deal with matters of perhaps merely academic interest, such as can conveniently be postponed to happier times. On that account the Government asks members to assist it in concluding these sittings some time next week.

Members will have observed that I gave notice of motion to sit in the daytime. That aspect I shall not discuss at this moment, but I hope that next week we shall sit for two or three days commencing in the morning. I hope members will agree to that proposal. In fact, before it was decided to call this Parliament together, I received word that the Prime Minister proposes to hold a conference of Premiers in Canberra on the 22nd April. This will necessitate my leaving Western Australia not later than Saturday, the 18th April, and possibly, owing to the disorganisation of the train service, a day or two earlier. I am not sure just at what time I shall have to take my departure, because the Australian railways, and more especially the Trans-Australian line, have been taken over for military purposes. Members will appreciate that when the Prime Minister calls a conference of

Premiers and other Ministers of the States, there is important business to be done. I necessarily desire to be present in this House when important matters are being discussed here. Therefore I hope members will realise the need for holding only a small number of sittings at this juncture, seeing that it is highly important for me to be present at Canberra when matters of the highest importance to Western Australia are being discussed and determined there.

Opportunity will be given for the discussion of the general statement I am now making, and other Ministers may have statements to make regarding the activities of their departments. Only one of the other Australian States has thought it necessary to call its Parliament together. I have been in communication with the Premiers of the various States, and I find that none of them is summoning his Parliament with the exception of New South Wales, which usually has a short sitting at this time of the year. The consensus of opinion has been that members of State Governments are so busily occupied with matters contingent on the war, that unless their full time is available for that work it may suffer delays for want of constant close attention. Such attention it is not practicable for Ministers to give while Parliament is sitting.

Western Australia is in an almost unique position, because it is very much isolated. We have not the opportunity for close contact with the powers-that-be nor do we get nearly as much information as is available to the Governments of the other States, which are within a day's travel of Commonwealth Ministers. Because of our isolation we are also unfortunate as Federal Ministers have found it impossible to visit Western Australia, except for Senator Fraser and the hurried visit of the Prime Minister just after Christmas. I regret to note that there was some criticism of the Prime Minister's visit to his own constituency in our State. There were some people who said that he was merely taking a holiday; but in my opinion his visit on that occasion, notwithstanding that he did not make many public appearances, was beneficial to the State, as important conferences were held dealing with matters of vital concern to the defence of Western Australia.

Because of our isolation we have not frequent contacts with Federal Ministers, and

we are not as well informed as to what is going on as are the Governments of the Eastern States. Members may, therefore, feel there are some matters with which they are not thoroughly conversant and which they desire to discuss for the purpose of getting information or giving information or assistance in the tremendous task of prosecuting this war. That is the desire not only of members of the party I represent, or of the Country Party or the National Party, but of all members. It is felt that Parliament should assemble for a short time so that members will have an opportunity of meeting each other, conferring with Ministers and generally discussing the war position with a view to taking combined and co-ordinated action in regard to the many matters in respect of which they feel they can be of great assistance to our State and Australia as a whole in this time of peril. There is every justification for calling Parliament together in the circumstances I have mentioned and I hope the result will be beneficial in the work we have to do.

For security reasons, many matters which have been dealt with by the Government cannot be openly discussed. Members will appreciate that. Nor is it expected that we should discuss the tactical and strategical position of the Commonwealth defences. Some members may perhaps desire to say that in regard to their own districts the adequacy of the military, naval or aerial measures, about which they have every right to be concerned, is insufficient. But even though I have consulted the General Officer Commanding and the chiefs of the services, and have also had an opportunity of attending conferences of the War Council, those details are not for publication. They are not to be disseminated amongst the people. They are a closely-held secret. I hope members will not during the course of this debate inquire how many rifles or how many machine guns are in a certain district, or whether any aeroplanes are stationed there. What I think we can usefully discuss is whether, if an attack should be made on a certain place, measures are being taken in order to evacuate the civilians, to provide air-raid shelters and matters of that kind.

But all those matters are not nearly as important as is the successful resistance to any attack. That is a point which struck me during long discussions I have had with

local authorities. What action should be taken to provide some amelioration after an attack has been made? No mention has been made of the sum of money which has been allocated for this purpose throughout Australia; however, the main thing for a country engaged in war is not to erect hospitals, first-aid posts, and air-raid shelters, or to provide nets for camouflage, but to consider what is to be done successfully to defend the country. Every penny possible should be spent in armaments in order to prevent an attack being made on us, rather than that we should spend a large sum of money for ameliorative efforts after an attack has been made.

While we have accepted the responsibility for air-raid shelters, fire and gas protection and evacuation of civilians, the most important thing in the prosecution of the war is to employ the whole of our resources in equipment, manpower and money in resisting aggression, and, when the time comes, for ourselves to take the offensive. Some people have said to me that the Government ought to spend half a million for air-raid shelters here and there; we should have nets here and first-aid posts and hospitals all over the State; but let us not concentrate on such matters to the exclusion of what is most important, that is, resistance to the invader. That should be the main purpose; all our resources should be concentrated on that effort. Whilst the Government recognises that such expenditure is necessary, it has said it will not stand in the way of the Federal Government raising and spending every penny possible for defence. I will refer later to the supreme importance of such action, but some money can be devoted to other things, which are the responsibility of the State.

It can now be said that Parliament was wise in deciding that no election would be held early this year. At the time when the election would ordinarily have been held, parts of the State were being bombarded from the air. The Japanese entry into the war made it necessary that the utmost speed should be exercised in preparing ourselves against the threat of invasion. The Minister for the North-West is painfully aware of that fact. When Parliament adjourned, a Premiers' Conference was held almost immediately. Parliament adjourned in the second week in December and I immediately proceeded to the Eastern States to attend

that conference, but the position was then obscure and there were many divergencies of opinion as to what should be done. We did not get very far at that conference. There was very strong divergence of opinion about shelters; whether we should have slit trenches or surface shelters. Many such matters were discussed, and there were obvious objections to various proposals. At that stage more attention was paid to those objections than to actually doing things. On our return to the State, however, we got right down to the job, collected all the requisite information as to what needed to be done, and went to the further conference at the beginning of February armed with full details as to what was considered necessary. Apparently all the decisions we made were to some extent wrong, but we thought it would be worse if nothing were done.

Something had to be done, if only partially. We went to the conference in February fully armed with information and with a full knowledge of what we intended to press for, and determined that something must be done in regard to these important matters. While there was still some disagreement in regard to matters of detail, it was agreed that action by all the States was imperative. Many doubtful points were cleared up: for instance, there was the matter of evacuation and shelters. Previously these were not included in the avenues of expenditure of Commonwealth money; funds granted by the Commonwealth to the States were not available for expenditure in those directions. There had been so much divergence of opinion in regard to what should be done that it had been decided there should be no expenditure in these directions from Commonwealth funds. At the later conference, however, there was a general feeling that decisions must be made, and the conference reached a determination to get on with the job. On our return to this State, we paid immediate attention to matters that required decisions.

In the first instance, the Civil Defence Council was entirely re-organised. It was originally formed for the purpose of planning everything, of having a plan ready for a time of emergency. The conference that had been held made it clear that the time was not one for planning but for action. Consequently the Civil Defence Council was re-organised, and to a great extent a new personnel was put in charge, and instead of merely planning, decisions were reached and

plans put into effect. A conference was called with local authorities, and the provision of air raid shelters was undertaken. The financial responsibility of the State, the local authorities and the Commonwealth was determined, and work began in earnest. At the beginning of February there was not a trench or an air raid shelter or a shelter of any extent existing anywhere in Western Australia, I should say, but within four or five weeks of the conference, so great was the impetus given to the planning of shelters and suchlike that one was hardly able to recognise the place.

Plans were undertaken for evacuation from what are known as target areas. A census was taken of those target areas which were indicated to the Civil Defence Council by the General Officer Commanding in Western Australia. There is some misconception as to what target areas are. There are what are known as vital areas and vulnerable areas, but the plans that were made were only for what are target areas; that is places that may have to be destroyed or may be subject to gunfire in the event of invasion by the enemy. They are areas which in the event of a landing would be in the direct line of fire, and none of the civil population should remain in them. The financial responsibilities of the Government, the local authorities and individuals themselves in respect of evacuation were set out quite plainly, and all knew where they stood in that connection. Complete evacuation of women and children from the North-West ports was arranged, and completed before the hostile air attack occurred. The black-out was tightened up and more rigidly enforced. Important Press statements were made informing the public of the steps that were being taken. These dealt principally with air raid shelters and evacuation matters.

In order that the House might know something of the financial arrangements made in connection with this aspect of the Civil Defence Council's work, I desire to inform members of the exact position. At the conference in February it was agreed that there should be an expenditure of approximately £3,000,000 for the civil defence needs of the Commonwealth and the States conjointly. The first £500,000 of this is provided by the Commonwealth Government, but the States are expected to supplement it on a pound for pound basis. The share of Western Australia from the Commonwealth was £29,405; with an equal contribution from our own

funds the total amount available will be £58,810. The Commonwealth further decided to spend £500,000 in purchasing certain essential equipment, such as tin hats, respirators, stirrup pumps, and that kind of thing. Some of this equipment will be given or lent by the Commonwealth to the States free of cost, according to the needs of the States. The Commonwealth Government will also spend up to £1,000,000 in connection with air raid measures for munition works. These include the provision of shelters for employees, and the provision of camouflage and necessary protection against bombardment. The Commonwealth Government having these large munition factories in all parts of Australia felt the responsibility to arrange for their defence or protection, and in this matter proposes to expend approximately £1,000,000.

Just prior to the conclusion of the conference the Commonwealth Government agreed to find a further £500,000 for civil defence work. In connection with this amount there is no set condition in regard to contributions by the States, but this question is the subject of negotiations between the States and the Commonwealth, and these have not yet been completed. However, the Commonwealth amount will definitely be available, and presumably our share will be at least equal to if not more than our share of the original £500,000; that is, £29,405.

Where the States have been short of money, this money has been made available to carry out necessary work. For instance, I think no other State has had to meet the necessity for evacuating people by air, as we have had to do in Western Australia. Things of that kind which may occur in any particular State will receive special consideration and out of the £500,000 funds will be provided for States which have to face disabilities not experienced by other States. Out of the £500,000 we think we shall receive a similar amount to what we obtained before, approximately £30,000, which we can supplement ourselves. That money is provided to meet emergency conditions and will be spent wherever it is required. For instance, because of its geographical position, South Australia may not require any of the money to be spent in its territory. On the other hand, in the North-West of Western Australia or the north-east coast of Queensland it may be that

many hundreds or thousands or even tens of thousands of pounds will have to be expended. I hope, and I am sure members have the same hope, that the Japs will get no further than those districts and that much of the expenditure provided for will not be necessary.

At the second conference it was agreed that money should be provided for evacuation and shelters which were previously excluded from the priorities. The figures I am about to give indicate the expenditure so far incurred by the Civil Defence Council under each priority, plus the estimate of the additional expenditure contemplated. The amount of £91,195 incurred and estimated for fire fighting schemes includes about £80,000 which may come within the definition of essential equipment not available to the States and, if so, will be paid for by the Commonwealth. The items of expenditure and estimated expenditure are as follows:—

Priority		Expenditure Estimate.	
		incurred.	
		£	£
1.	Controlled lighting schemes	5,750	1,502
2.	Fire fighting schemes.....	42,801	48,394
3.	First aid organisation and medical equipment	3,055	35,123
4.	Warning systems	3,458	28,150
5.	Instructions to key personnel	3,304	2,600
6.	Instructions to public	542	500
7.	Evacuation	8,000	12,600
8.	Shelters	9,157	30,000
General:	Disposal of the dead	8,200
		<hr/>	<hr/>
		76,967	167,000
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	£244,936.	

On shelters we have spent up to date £10,000 and it is expected that we will have to meet further expenditure of £30,000 on works that have already been commenced or which are part of a scheme already in existence. The State Government has already spent a total of about £76,000 and it is estimated that in the near future in carrying out enterprises that have been started and have to be completed, a further expenditure of £160,000 will be incurred, in all a total of a quarter of a million pounds. That does not include provision for such things as the appointment of special constables and matters of that type. In addition, in regard to our own Government property, we have spent £27,000 for work already in hand and it is estimated that other work contemplated will cost another £100,000. These figures will give members an idea of the expenditure and responsibility that the State Govern-

ment has undertaken in regard to what might be termed the purely civil defence aspect of our war effort.

When the life of Parliament was extended I agreed to consult the Leaders of the Opposition parties whenever possible. The Government felt that such co-operation would be helpful, and the Consultative Council was accordingly formed. This council has had very useful discussions and has dealt with many very important matters. Whichever Minister was concerned, in any particular subject was present at the meeting, and it was possible to get straight into the business under discussion and give information regarding the whole matter. In some instances policy was influenced because of the useful discussions that took place. The council, as its name implies, is a consultative body. It consults and discusses concerning matters and, as a result of consultation and discussion, many very useful and important things have been done in the State. But for the existence of the council many of those things might not have been done so expeditiously. Ministers are very busy and have not much time for quiet contemplation or for thinking matters out. They are busily engaged in doing things that necessarily must be done. Other members of the council have probably had more time for contemplation and more time to investigate matters, and the benefit arising from their foresight is something for which I give full credit and which I publicly acknowledge.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Does the council accept responsibility for some of the decisions?

The PREMIER: No; it acts in a purely consultative capacity and, for whatever has been done as a result of its deliberations, the Government accepts full responsibility. Up to date most of the things done have been the outcome of very wise decisions that I am sure would meet with the approval of every member of the House. The Government also felt that private members of Parliament could be of great assistance at the present time. Various members had expressed their willingness to assist and had stated that they would welcome a lead from the Government. This was given in a letter forwarded to each member a week or two ago setting out sug-

gestions and stating that any further ideas that were sent to the Government would receive consideration. I pointed out that the suggestions contained in the letter were not the only matters to be tackled, but that if members could offer suggestions for the welfare of the State, their assistance would be welcomed. I received many replies from members and I think that, as a result of the letter, members will be able to get together and do things which, but for this opportunity of meeting together on this occasion, would not have permitted the concerted action that is now possible. Members have mentioned various ways in which they feel they can help and things they want to do. If they have suggestions for collective effort on their part, I shall be glad to hear from them so that the combined effort, capacity and intelligence of all may be availed of to the utmost in forwarding the tremendous job we have on hand.

Both the Government and the Consultative Council were concerned with the situation in this State from a defence standpoint, and attempts were made to ascertain the actual position and, as far as possible, secure an improvement. There is no secret about the fact that the Allies desire a very much greater output of equipment of every kind. Mr. Churchill has made a statement to that effect time after time. He has said that we are short of certain things and cannot do certain things, and that it is necessary for everybody to do more. Tremendous urge and drive have been put into the war effort by members of the British Parliament. Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Curtin have also said we are not doing enough. We in Australia are doing a great deal, but we should be doing more. Every citizen in every allied country should be giving of his best.

Mr. Raphael: Why is not Western Australia allowed to do a bit?

The PREMIER: If the hon. member saw all that is being done in Western Australia, he would not make that remark. Still, I do not say that I am satisfied with what is being done here. Perhaps the majority of members are not at all satisfied with what we are doing. It would be a bad sign if we showed smug self-satisfaction because we are making 10,000 or 15,000 bombs or some Bren guns or doing other things about which most people know

nothing because the facts are not published. People with inside knowledge know differently, and I think the Minister for Industrial Development will be able to tell the House some of the many things being done in this State at present. Had it been said three or four years ago that in the event of war so much would have been undertaken, the statement would have been laughed at and the idea considered impracticable.

Mr. Raphael: I will probably make a few comparisons next week between what we are doing and what we should be doing.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is in the same position as is Mr. Churchill; he is not a bit satisfied. Although the munition factories in England have doubled, trebled and quadrupled their output, Mr. Churchill is not satisfied. I hope none of us will reach the stage of being satisfied with what is being done.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The trouble is the discrimination between the States.

Mr. Raphael: You cannot even travel out of the State. We are the scrap heap and always have been.

The PREMIER: I think it is a good thing that people cannot travel as they may desire to do.

Mr. J. Hegney: Does that apply also to people in the other States?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. Raphael: I know that people over there can travel.

The PREMIER: I know they cannot.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I will not warn the member for Victoria Park again about interjecting.

The PREMIER: I am aware that, because of military necessity, members representing country constituencies have cause for criticism and complaint regarding the disorganisation of the railway service, but I assure them that all of it is due to military necessity. I would far sooner see the railways used to transport 4,000, 5,000 or 10,000 troops to a vulnerable point than have the railways made available for members to travel.

Mr. Raphael: It does not apply to the wives of Federal members.

The PREMIER: Wives of Federal members cannot travel.

Mr. Raphael: Their wives have travelled, and by special plane, too.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The PREMIER: The hon. member started off by referring to railway travelling and now he is talking about plane travelling.

Mr. Raphael: They went by plane.

The PREMIER: We are not talking about planes.

The Minister for Mines: You are jealous.

Mr. Raphael: I am not jealous, but I shall have something to say on that.

Mr. Hughes: Will you go if we get you a seat in a plane?

Mr. SPEAKER: I ask the member for Victoria Park to keep order. The Premier is entitled to a fair hearing when making an important statement as he is doing today. I will not warn the member for Victoria Park again.

The PREMIER: The Prime Minister of Great Britain has felt concern; the British House of Parliament has been tremendously concerned, and only because of the immense prestige of the Prime Minister and the general recognition of his wonderful capacity, force and drive has a change of Government been obviated. Still, people are dissatisfied, although the factories of Britain have quadrupled their output and in some instances are doing a hundred times as much as they were doing previously. But what has been achieved is not good enough; we must strive for the superlative. Churchill, Roosevelt, Menzies when he was Prime Minister, all said so.

Hon. C. G. Latham: And Mr. Willecock.

The PREMIER: I have been more anxious to get things done by making money available to people who will do the work rather than talk about it, but when the opportunity has presented itself I have stressed, in effective places such as conferences of Premiers and Treasurers, and so far as lay in my power have made demands for certain things to be done here. I repeat that I am not satisfied with what has been done, and I do not expect that any member of the House is satisfied. I know that the member for Pingelly (Mr. Seward) is not satisfied; I received a letter from him. Many people are not aware of what is being done in parts of the State other than where they happen to be. In the hon. member's electorate is a garage that is doing munition

work or work for the production of things necessary for the conduct of the war. I am very pleased that at Pingelly something is being done, and being done well. But the hon. member also has this bug of dissatisfaction, in common with Mr. Churchill, myself and others, feeling that although in his small country town certain work is being done, not sufficient is being done. I dare say that, apart from the member for Pingelly, no member of this House was aware of the important work being done at Pingelly, and the same may be said of other country towns in this State.

The shortage of war equipment has been a very serious matter. At Dunkirk, Great Britain lost a tremendous amount of her offensive equipment. Because of that loss, and because of the over-running of France by the Germans, there was a tremendous shortage of equipment. England was so badly off in this respect that even Australia was asked to supply some of the deficiencies at that time. Australia went to England's aid, and all the equipment that could be spared was sent to help fight off the threatened invasion at that most critical stage. We felt that Britain's need was greater than ours, even though Australia was then short of equipment. However, we sent what equipment we could to Britain to help her in those perilous times. As a result, Australia, in common with other Allied Nations, has been short of equipment. A similar position arose after the campaigns in Greece and Crete, in both of which places we lost stocks of equipment and stores. In Singapore also, large quantities of material were captured from us. To make up the leeway of all those losses is a terrific task. Only a week or two ago Mr. Atlee, Deputy Prime Minister of Great Britain, made the following statement:—

There is nothing worse in war time than trying to be equally strong at all points when you have only limited forces and limited equipment. One must concentrate one's forces and recognise that losses may have to be sustained in some theatre of war. By no conceivable means could we have concentrated in the Far East military, naval or air power to equal that of Japan.

We did not have enough equipment effectively to prosecute offensive measures in Malaya, as we all know. We may recall that at his Press conference President Roosevelt reiterated that "Everything possible was be-

ing done in the South-West Pacific." He again drew attention to what he termed, "A little old lesson in geography."

That lesson, said Mr. Roosevelt, teaches one that to get anything to the South-West Pacific area takes an awful long time. Furthermore, there is a world shortage of shipping.

There is a world shortage of shipping for the conveyance of both men and munitions. What applies to the whole world strategic situation, applies in the same manner to Australia. The Consultative Council and the Government, in looking at the defence position of the State, took all these things into consideration. We were not satisfied, and made persistent and consistent representations to the Federal Government and Army chiefs here, and we kept on stressing that whilst we knew we could not get adequate equipment and adequate forces, we did want a fair share of what was done, so that a reasonable fight could be put up in Western Australia with the resources at our disposal.

It may truthfully be said that most of our losses have been incurred on account of lack of equipment rather than through lack of men. Germany and Japan have been concentrating for years upon armament production and the provision of all types of munitions, and have therefore had a big start. Slowly but surely the leeway has been made up. From the meagre information at our disposal I would say that we are gradually making up the leeway, and that almost if not entirely we are now on a quota basis in regard to the production of many of the necessities now possessed by the Axis powers. Churchill has not said, "We will go ahead and fight and clean these people up." No, he said, "We are in for a more parlous time perhaps for the whole of 1942." The President of the United States does not say, "We can start out to win this war in the next few weeks." He says that in 1943 we will probably be able to give these people a beating.

Whilst we are approaching the stage of nearer equality with the Axis Powers, we are in for a pretty parlous time for the next few months. There is, however, this to be said, that we are in a much more satisfactory position today than we were a few months ago. If the full story were told many people would be surprised at what has been accomplished in Western Australia

since the new year. It must be accepted that we cannot discuss the strategic position, or say what tactics can be undertaken concerning offence in Australia. We could not do that satisfactorily in any case because the position changes daily. Two or three weeks ago a certain position arose which was said to be eminently satisfactory. Three days later, however, the position had entirely changed. What had been a satisfactory position became one of despair and there seemed no possibility of anything being done from the offensive standpoint. A plan which might be all right today may be out-of-date the following day.

Additional help is coming to Australia. Great Britain has promised it, and Great Britain does not break her word. America has promised it. We can see evidence of it ourselves. No one with an observant eye can fail to see for himself the number of American soldiers in our midst, and the great number of Australian soldiers. Unquestionably the return to Australia of the A.I.F. has immensely improved our position from the military standpoint. Moreover, the A.I.F. brought most of its equipment back to Australia.

Mr. Berry: Another important point is the assistance that we received from the Navy.

The PREMIER: If we begin to eulogise the work done concerning the successful conveyance of that tremendous number of troops back to Australia, we will be unable to find words of a sufficiently superlative character to represent our praise of the work done on that occasion. Help is coming to Australia. It cannot be disclosed, and the facts cannot be made public. The longer time we have the stronger we will be, and the more help that comes to Australia generally the more help can be passed on to Western Australia. I do not know as much as members may think I know with regard to the defence position, but I say with a full sense of responsibility that the position is immeasurably improved so far as Western Australia is concerned compared with what it was say two months ago.

Hon. N. Keenan: Two or three weeks ago.

The PREMIER: Yes, and in the next two or three months there will be just as great an improvement as there has been in the last five or six weeks. I do not want any smug satisfaction or complacency to arise because these things are said, although they

are facts, but it is encouraging to us to think that we have not the possibility but the probability of being able successfully to defend ourselves for the time being, and in the end successfully being able to take the offensive. The Government felt that it could speed up the war effort if it were given greater authority to act on behalf of the Commonwealth Government. Suggestions were accordingly made respecting directions in which this could be done. They were discussed by the Minister for Works and the Minister for Lands when they were in Canberra, and results of their representations are now awaited.

A desire was expressed by the Prime Minister that outlying States should be represented by the Ministers stationed in Canberra. This matter was discussed between the Governments of Tasmania and Western Australia. The Tasmanian Government agreed to the proposal and has sent a Minister to Canberra to remain there. I and Ministers think that because of the isolation of Western Australia frequent visits by Ministers to the Eastern States would be far better because, with their knowledge of local conditions, they could make more adequate representations regarding defence and departmental matters that arise from time to time. Accordingly, we have arranged that a Minister will visit Canberra, if possible, at least once every month to deal with such problems. The Minister for Industrial Development was in the Eastern States in January, when his mission had relation to the successful development of the alunite deposits at Lake Campion, respecting which matter the Minister will no doubt give members more details later on. I attended a second conference (as I regard them): the Minister for Lands also made the trip East and later still the Minister for Works was in the Eastern States, from which he returned about a week ago. The intention of the Government is to continue that arrangement and it will be necessary for me and the Minister for Civil Defence, more particularly in his capacity as Minister for Mines, to proceed to Canberra to discuss matters affecting the gold-mining industry.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: When he went East the Deputy Premier had an escort. Will you have an escort when you go East?

The PREMIER: I shall be satisfied to have with me my colleague, the Minister for Civil Defence. Members will fully realise

that it is impossible for me in a short statement to deal comprehensively with the many important subjects that have received the attention of the Government since Parliament last met. Some of the matters have already been indicated in my circular letter to members concerning directions in which they could assist the Government. There are one or two subjects of major importance that I consider should be specially mentioned if but briefly. The matters, if necessary, can be elaborated upon by the Ministers concerned.

With regard to food production, the large number of men of the Fighting Forces who are based on Australia and must be provided for, has made it imperative that we effect a considerable increase in the production of perishable foodstuffs such as vegetables, dairy products, pork, and so on. This problem was closely examined by the Minister for Agriculture during his recent visit to Canberra, and as a result action has been taken that will effect a considerable improvement in the position. I do not want to anticipate anything the Minister for Agriculture will say later on, but undoubtedly there is room for improvement in this respect and I hope it will be effected by collaboration and co-operation. As a matter of fact, the three Fighting Forces are in competition with others respecting food supplies, and this naturally affects the position regarding those available for the civil population. The providing of an adequate food supply will represent a vital consideration in the successful prosecution of the defence of Australia, and in an endeavour to work towards that end the co-operation of all concerned is essential.

In addition to assuring the maximum supplies of all State-produced commodities, the closest collaboration between State departments is being maintained to enable us better to advise the Commonwealth and the fighting service representatives of deficiencies, of where such deficiencies are likely to occur, and respecting the anticipated production of all necessary foodstuffs. Members will realise that the productive position of the State has been seriously jeopardised by the larger number of men who have been called up for service in the military forces. Many thousands of men cannot be taken out of production in a State like Western Australia without the output being seriously affected. Whereas prior to the present war Western Australia could produce all that was re-

quired locally and have an exportable surplus of various products, the advent of many thousands of men from overseas or from the Eastern States imposes a greater strain upon our resources, which accentuates the position created by the calling up of men engaged formerly in food production. In order to cope with the position satisfactorily, much co-operation and organisation is necessary to make available the vital foodstuff supplies.

In addition to increasing our primary production, the Government is most anxious to do everything possible to expand secondary industries, especially those associated with the war effort. Members are familiar with the great progress that has already been made in this direction, and it is hoped that the recent appointment of a Director of Industrial Production will assist us to make the fullest possible use of the productive capacity of every factory and workshop in Western Australia.

Directly associated with these two problems of increasing our primary and secondary industries is the difficulty of securing adequate manpower. The task of judging the relative importance of the demands for men made by the Defence Forces and by industry is very complex. An organisation has been set up in the State on behalf of the Commonwealth to deal with this question, which will become a live one during the next few weeks. Grave concern has been felt respecting the future of the gold mining industry which so vitally affects Western Australia. Some months ago it was suggested that gold mining would have to be curtailed, but the suggestion came in a roundabout and unofficial way. I took prompt action on behalf of the Government to ascertain the policy of the Commonwealth Government regarding this matter, and I was then advised that there was no intention of curtailing gold production, which was regarded as essential.

Hon. N. Keenan: When was that?

The PREMIER: When the Minister for Mines was with me in Canberra just prior to last Christmas! I raised the matter in a general way but the Minister for Mines was not quite satisfied with the answer that was given, and he put the question directly to the Federal Government and received an assurance that gold mining was recognised as an essential industry in war

time. Since then there have been grave developments in the war situation and the suggestion that gold mining operations may have to be curtailed has become more insistent. As soon as the Government heard that gold production might be affected seriously a departmental committee was formed to make a complete examination of the financial and economic effects such a move would entail upon Western Australia. That was done so that should any question of the curtailment of operations in the mining industry be stressed seriously, the State Government would have all the necessary information available to enable an effective protest to be made to the Federal Government. By that move the Government thought a definite contribution could be made to the task and the interests of Western Australia could thereby be best conserved. Subsequently the position has become very uncertain. Statements and rumours of various descriptions have been spread and the Chamber of Mines associated with other bodies discussed the whole question with the Minister for Mines and with me.

A misapprehension arose respecting that conference. My secretary received a telephonic communication asking whether I would meet two or three members of the Chamber of Mines and a few others so that they could discuss the matter with the Minister for Mines and myself. I agreed to meet them, saying that if anyone was in trouble I would be only too happy to endeavour to assist him. Without any further communication from the parties, I naturally expected that two or three officers of the Chamber of Mines, or perhaps some of the directors of mining companies, would discuss matters with me, and I never anticipated that a delegation of 25 would wait upon me in my office. The delegation included representatives of local governing bodies, the Chamber of Mines, the Perth Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Manufactures and of other bodies. I desire to make that position clear because members representing gold mining constituencies will appreciate that if I had anticipated that such a representative conference was to be held, I would have invited them to be present so that their assistance and advice could have been forthcoming in connection with matters relating to the successful operation of the gold mining industry.

As the uncertainty of the whole position was having a very disturbing effect, I telegraphed to the Prime Minister a request that he should make a definite statement setting out the actual position. I am hopeful that the statement will be made in the near future. The Minister for Works discussed the matter tentatively with the Prime Minister recently, but unfortunately it was the day on which General MacArthur had arrived in Canberra and the Federal Parliament had met for two or three days and consequently the Prime Minister was very busy. Nevertheless, the Minister did have a conversation with him. I am hopeful that the Prime Minister will make a statement setting out the whole position. I am very disturbed even today because I understand that about 300 or 400 men who were previously manpowered in the gold mining industry in Kalgoorlie alone have been called up. To give members an idea of the economic importance of the gold mining industry to Western Australia I would point out that £2,000,000 of revenue is directly received from the industry and its allied industries. That is to say 15 to 20 per cent. of the State's revenue—not production but revenue—comes from the gold mining industry. The proportion of production is greater—about 35 per cent.—but the revenue of the State would be reduced 20 per cent. if the gold mining industry were seriously curtailed. Members will thus be aware of the importance we attach to it and the vital effect any curtailment will have.

Mr. Marshall: It cannot have any effect after the 27th of this month.

The PREMIER: The hon. member knows more about it than I do!

Mr. Marshall: The Federal Government will take it from you, so what is the difference?

The PREMIER: I am very pleased that those people directly connected with the industry—the miners and the proprietors and managers—have said that if any sacrifice is demanded of them they will not be behind in doing their part and I think that they are sincere in their assertions.

I want to make a brief reference to alunite, about which I daresay the Minister will have more to say at a later stage. We have been very concerned with regard to working the deposits of alunite at Lake Campion in order to obtain supplies of potash for use in Australia. In this we have received the

direct encouragement of the Commonwealth Government. This matter has a very important bearing on the war effort and we are anxious to exploit these valuable resources in the interests of Australia. The question of producing aluminium from the residues is receiving the close attention of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research and it is hoped that experiments will be concluded at an early date.

In regard to port dues, every consideration has been extended to visiting American vessels, and harbour facilities have been improved in order to expedite their working. We have been told that shipping is scarce and if we can, by improvements at our ports, provide a quicker turn round and thus save days in time spent in loading and unloading, that will be a big contribution to the war effort. In order that we might show some appreciation of the efforts America is making to assist us, most of the harbour dues that are charged on all vessels have been discontinued so far as the United States ships are concerned. When we have a session to deal with Legislative matters, a provision will be introduced whereby gifts made to comforts funds for allied troops will be allowed as a deduction under the assessment Act for income tax purposes.

With regard to wheat, while it is undesirable, for security reasons, to give details, I can say that among the important conferences which I have held in recent weeks, was one dealing with the question of the transport and storage of wheat at the most appropriate places. There is not much use in dragging wheat to the coast and evolving plans for its destruction, if the need arose, when it can be left in the country, where it might be of tremendous use in a time of need. I think that much good will come of conferences which have been held in that connection.

Another important conference was held for the purpose of stepping up the production of coal in this State. There is great scope for increased supplies of coal and every effort is being made to provide them. The conference included representatives of the miners and mine owners, together with the Navy, the Mines Department and the railways. It is hoped that as a result we will achieve our objective of securing greater production. I wish to pay tribute to the mine owners and the

coal miners, who have shown on every possible occasion an intense desire in every possible way to increase production.

Mr. Mann: That is different from the Eastern States, is it not?

The PREMIER: Yes. It must be recognised that these people are the same as others. A large number of men working in the industry have enlisted and the industry is short of manpower. The other day it was pointed out that the Railway Department was short of supplies of coal and the men replied, "We will work on Good Friday and Easter Saturday." That was unprecedented. I want to pay a tribute to the miners for the way in which they have co-operated in every possible manner. Because of their environment and upbringing and training they are difficult people to deal with, but there has been no difficulty in securing their co-operation, for they have an intense desire to assist the State's production of coal.

I do not suppose that we get more divergence of opinion in a small community on any matter than upon that of liquor administration. It will be generally agreed, however, that there has been a considerable abuse of intoxicating liquor, and that has been the subject of very careful consideration. In an endeavour to curb the evil, hotels have had their trading hours reduced and are closed at 6 o'clock in the metropolitan area of this State. The Commonwealth Government has imposed a restriction of one-third on the production of beer.

Mr. Patrick: And spirits.

The PREMIER: Yes.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Not wine.

The PREMIER: No, not wine. The Commonwealth Government intended to impose further restrictions, by reducing the hours of trading to seven per day, but I notice by this morning's Press—I have no direct information—that the matter is to be discussed again at the forthcoming Premiers' Conference on the 22nd April. We are constantly watching the position and I think that the last word has not been said in regard to reform of the liquor trade. There are many abuses; many scandalous things have occurred, particularly in the metropolitan area and, if there is not a very distinct improvement, other reformatory measures will have to be taken in order that drink will not be

abused and will not be the menace which it is to our young men and more particularly to our young women.

As to food supplies, close attention has been given to organising reserve stocks of food throughout the State to meet possible emergency conditions. Difficulties have been encountered, particularly with transport of commodities that have to be imported. Important decisions were recently made to strengthen the organisation. The Emergency Reserve Stocks Committee will now organise current supplies as well as emergency supplies of foodstuffs for the civil population. Effective co-operation has been established between the Emergency Reserve Stocks Committee, the Foodstuffs Advisory Committee, which is organising the production of foodstuffs from the land, and the Commonwealth Deputy Controller of Defence Foodstuffs, who is organising food supplies for the fighting services.

Regarding the war situation generally, while it can be truthfully stated that the position has very considerably improved, there is no justification for either unwarranted optimism or dark pessimism. We have the hardest of tasks confronting us; there are anxious and perilous times ahead. There can be no slackening of effort in any direction, but there must be an increasing mobilisation of the whole of the resources of the State. The Commonwealth Government, with the assistance of the State, is dealing with the man and woman power resources so that every individual will be given a part to play in the defence of the country. Even those engaged in munition making and essential services, if they are not working overtime, may be called upon to do at least 48 hours per month in civil defence work of some description as a direct contribution to the war effort. Such work must be done in an honorary capacity. Every individual may be called upon by the Minister to give this spare-time effort.

So we have reached a point when the whole of the resources of the nation are being mobilised. There can be no slackening of effort on the score that we have survived the last four or five perilous weeks with no direct menace to this part of the State. At any moment the turn of the wheel may be in our direction, and we may be in the full blast of modern warfare with all its horrors. Five or six weeks ago it was not apparent to anyone whether the Japanese fleet, aerial

power and horde of manpower would be concentrated in this direction. For the time being the full blast of the Japanese blow has been turned in another direction, but if the Japanese are unsuccessful there, it might well happen that attention will be directed to Australia. Therefore I say that the full blast of war may overtake us at any time.

I do not want to draw a drab picture or unduly alarm the people, but that is a plain statement of fact which any of the defence authorities would corroborate. We cannot be complacent about what is going to happen. We cannot say, "The Japs have not come; knock off building air raid shelters; have nothing to do with first aid centres; do not bother about providing clearing stations or hospitals. We will have no trouble in Western Australia; this is merely a dark cloud that will pass over." I sincerely hope that people do not become imbued with that idea. While we all hope for the best, we must be prepared for the worst.

We, fortunately, have had some little time to prepare. Military preparations are proceeding at an accelerated pace. The industrial side is improving its output weekly. The wonderful men and women who, as A.R.P. wardens, have given most if not all of their leisure hours for over two years to render a service to the rest of the community should the necessity arise, are even more energetic than they were previously. We cannot let our fighting forces down; we must not let our civil defence workers down; we dare not let our country down. If this session of Parliament brings the people of the State to a greater realisation of the dangers confronting them and a greater determination to do their utmost in the work in which all must participate to achieve a victorious conclusion to the war, it will have been worth while. I repeat that the time of danger is not past but is still with us, and if our meeting instils the truth into the minds of the people so that they resolve to do more than they have done before, we shall have done a service to them.

So far as the State Government is concerned, everything will be done to continue co-operation in every way with the Commonwealth Government in its war effort. Western Australia has a splendid record of achievement in recruiting, in raising money for direct war purposes

and in voluntary giving to the many funds for comforts for our fighting services. The magnificent record of our soldiers, sailors and airmen, by whom two Victoria Crosses and many other decorations have already been won, and also of our men of the Merchant Marine, who have done an excellent job and to whom I take off my hat, gives us confidence that they will continue to cover themselves with glory in this war as in the war of 1914-18. Their record ensures that, if war comes to our shores, no effort and no sacrifice will be too great to secure victory. Our people can be relied upon to exhibit similar spirit and resolution and, when victory comes, I believe it will be said that the people of Western Australia have done their part.

Standing Order Suspension.

On motion by the Premier, resolved:

That Standing Order 211 be suspended to enable a motion dealing with the printing of the foregoing Statement to be moved at this sitting.

MOTION—PRINTING MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

THE PREMIER (Hon. J. C. Willecock—Geraldton) [6.6]: I move—

That the Ministerial Statement be printed.

On motion by Hon. C. G. Latham, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. J. C. Willecock—Geraldton) [6.7]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 14th April, at 11 a.m.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 6.8 p.m.