

prove it. He has suggested, however, that you renew your application in six months' time when it will receive further consideration.

That reply was received by a man who had taken over a farm and intended to be married. There was no building on the place and he was particularly anxious to utilise his spare time between shearing and harvesting in making cement bricks for a new house. His application could not be approved; he was told to renew it in six months' time! The manner in which these applications has been dealt with seems to indicate that proper consideration has not been given to the matter and certainly adequate information has not been made available to the public regarding the details of the housing scheme. In view of these circumstances, I move an amendment—

That the following words be added to the Address-in-reply:—“but regrets that this House has not already been placed in possession of complete details of any post war housing plans that have been agreed upon between the Commonwealth and State Governments specifying the types of houses to be erected, together with the estimated cost and rental of each type—

- (a) in the metropolitan area;
- (b) in country towns;
- (c) on farms

together with the priority allotted to each class.”

On motion by the Minister for Works, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.10 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 29th August, 1944.

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

QUESTION—W.A. BARLEY BOARD.

As to Tabling Balance Sheet.

Hon. G. B. WOOD asked the Chief Secretary:

Will the Chief Secretary lay on the Table of the House an annual balance sheet,

showing all figures relating to the W.A. Barley Board's activities?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

Yes. Audited statement of accounts will be available in the near future.

MOTION—FREMANTLE HARBOUR TRUST ACT.

To Disallow Bagged-Wheat Charges Regulation.

Debate resumed from the 22nd August on the following motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter:—

That new regulation No. 148 made under the Fremantle Harbour Trust Act, 1902, as published in the “Government Gazette” of the 24th December, 1943, and laid on the Table of the House on the 1st August, 1944, be and is hereby disallowed.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY [4.36]: I am afraid that Mr. Baxter, when moving the motion, omitted to give to the House a full picture of all the circumstances connected with the disallowance of the regulation. Therefore, in opposing the motion, I deem it necessary to furnish the House with certain details which I gave on a previous occasion when the House did disallow a regulation dealing with this subject. In the first place I consider it necessary to point out that there has always been a special schedule for the handling of bagged wheat, and that in the early days, before the advent of bulk-handling, all wheat exported from Fremantle was despatched in bags. Upon the advent of bulk handling and the gradual increase in the number of railway sidings equipped with bulk handling facilities, the quantity of wheat exported in bags from Fremantle gradually decreased; so much so that at one time the quantity exported in bags was only a few hundred thousand bushels.

Although during this period there has been a consistent loss on the handling of bagged-wheat, the Fremantle Harbour Trust believing that bagged wheat would be exported in smaller and smaller quantities, was prepared to carry the loss involved in connection with the charge then operating. A few years ago, however, a change came over the situation, and instead of the exports of bagged-wheat being further reduced, the quantity shipped from Fremantle rose to very large proportions, with the result that the Fremantle Harbour Trust in one year showed a loss of

over £6,000 on the handling of bagged wheat. It was at that stage that the Fremantle Harbour Trust decided it was necessary, in view of the outlook, to vary the charges which had operated for so many years.

It is interesting to note that there was no change in the charges made for the handling of bagged wheat from 1921 until the depression year, 1931-32. In that year the Harbour Trust, mainly on account of the reduced rate of wages it was paying, granted a rebate that amounted to 22½ per cent. on the handling of bagged wheat at Fremantle. At that time the wages paid to lumpers who handled bagged wheat was comparatively low; I think it was 2s. 4½d. per hour. Since then the rate has increased to 3s. 11½d. Consequently, the Harbour Trust, acting under the old regulation that had been based on the wages paid many years before, could not do any other than show an increasing loss in the event of bagged wheat being exported in increasing quantities. So it was that the Fremantle Harbour Trust requested that its charges for the handling of bagged wheat should be amended. The Trust approached the Australian Wheat Board which handles the whole of the wheat in Australia. It also approached the Price Fixing Commissioner and eventually it was agreed that the Trust was entitled to increase the charges.

The Trust did not desire to make a profit out of the handling of bagged wheat so it went to a lot of trouble in order to find out as accurately as possible what was the actual cost. Having done that, the Trust fixed a new schedule which was embodied in a regulation that eventually came to this House. On the motion of Mr. Baxter this House disallowed that regulation. When the regulation was disallowed the Fremantle Harbour Trust went into the matter a little further to see in what way it was possible effectively, as a public utility, to make any variation in the charges that had been disallowed, believing that as this is a handling charge representing money paid out by the Trust for work performed by men handling bagged wheat, the Trust was at least entitled to a return of the actual cost. On a previous occasion I told the House those facts. I went into a little more detail, but the House was apparently not prepared at that time to

accept the viewpoint which I advanced and consequently the regulation was disallowed.

I want to draw attention to this fact: By an arrangement with the Australian Wheat Board, the whole of the bulk wheat exported from this State is despatched on a cost basis. There has never been any argument about that. The Fremantle Harbour Trust said to the Australian Wheat Board, "We are prepared to handle bagged wheat on the same basis." The Wheat Board recognised that the Harbour Trust was entitled to some increase in its charges and so long as it was based on cost the Wheat Board did not mind. But the Board said, "Rather than have an arrangement with you whereby we actually pay the cost, we would prefer to have a specific regulation containing the actual charges in order that we may know where we stand all the time." So the Trust, having given the matter further consideration, came to the conclusion that it could take a business risk by reducing slightly some of the charges that were included in the regulation that had been disallowed. When Mr. Baxter says that all the Harbour Trust did was to reduce two or three charges by five per cent. and that it took very little notice of the viewpoint of this House, I think he is being a little unfair. I do not believe anyone will argue that the handling charges should not be paid for at cost.

The argument that the Harbour Trust shows a very big surplus each year and for that reason it should be prepared to show a loss on the handling charges of wheat, is illogical for two reasons. The first reason is that so far as wheat is concerned—and as a matter of fact, any other primary product that is exported from Fremantle—no harbour or wharfage charge is made by the Harbour Trust. This is one of the few countries where that policy prevails. Members are aware that it is the policy of the Government, in order to encourage our primary industries as far as possible, that these commodities should be exported free of harbour charge and that is what happens to wheat. The hon. member referred to the charges that are made against ships that come to Fremantle for the purpose of loading wheat and said that those charges are included in the costs against wheat.

That is perfectly true but I have to point out that at no time does the handling of wheat as a commodity contribute to any surplus revenue there might be for the

Harbour Trust and that the whole of the revenue received from ships that come to Fremantle for the purpose of loading wheat amounts to less than half of one per cent. of the revenue of the Trust. So, after all, while it may sound all right as an argument, there is very little in it. I have already pointed out that bulk wheat is handled at cost. Now we are faced with this position: Arising from the fact that many ports to which we export wheat are not able to deal with bulk wheat, the Australian Wheat Board has found it necessary to export large quantities of bagged wheat and in order to do that has had to bag considerable quantities of the wheat which has reached the Fremantle wharf in bulk. If that wheat were exported as bulk wheat, it would pay the actual cost of handling.

Because that wheat is put into bags and then exported Mr. Baxter desires this House to say that those concerned should not be called upon to pay the actual cost. I cannot agree with that point of view. Figures that have been supplied to me indicate that the quantity of wheat exported in bags during recent months has been much lower than it was, say, two years ago. Consequently, arising from that fact and also because the regulation was in force for a very limited period, no very great loss has been incurred by the Fremantle Harbour Trust on the handling of bagged wheat during the 12 months. For the year 1943 the total loss was only £896. During the previous year, 1942, the loss amounted to £6,169. In that year no less than 4,027,125 bushels were exported as bagged wheat as against only 1,765,680 bushels despatched as bulk wheat. For the current year, 1944, the figures show that 884,811 bushels were exported in the form of bagged-wheat while 6,760,021 bushels were exported as bulk wheat.

I mention these figures because I want the House to have a full understanding of the position as I see it. Near the wheat silo on the North Wharf a bag-filling plant has been installed by the Australian Wheat Board, and it is capable of filling bags with wheat at the rate of 1,000 tons per day. That plant is ready to operate. It has been installed because of the fact that wheat will have to be exported in future and for some considerable time to come, in bags rather than in bulk. We know the reasons for that. They were given by Mr. Baxter as well as by myself. Consequently,

the Fremantle Harbour Trust can anticipate that from now on the figures I have just quoted will tend to be reversed.

Hon. J. Cornell: Has any mechanical appliance been installed for bag sewing?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I cannot say; I have not seen the plant.

Hon. J. Cornell: That is where the cost comes in.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The plant has been installed with the object of facilitating the export of wheat in bags and, as I mentioned, its capacity is 1,000 tons per day. In view of all the circumstances as we know them, more particularly in view of the fact that wheat despatched from Fremantle in bulk will be exported at cost, I cannot see any logical reason why this House should say that the wheat put into bags should be handled by the Trust at a distinct loss—and an increasing loss in accordance with the quantities that will have to be exported in the near future. While there is very little difference between the regulation disallowed last year and that which Mr. Baxter desires to have disallowed on this occasion, I think I am perfectly justified in saying that the Fremantle Harbour Trust had every justification for submitting the regulation in the form in which it now appears. Some reference has been made to the difficulty of arriving at what is the actual cost of handling. I emphasise the point that these charges differ entirely from the ordinary revenue of the Trust which is derived from harbour dues, pilotage dues and other such charges. The handling costs represent money that the Trust must pay out for the handling of this particular commodity.

Hon. J. Cornell: Against whom would the charge be debited?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Against the Australian Wheat Board.

Hon. G. W. Miles: No, against the farmer.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Eventually the farmer carries the charge.

Hon. J. Cornell: And they would insist on having bulk handling!

Hon. L. B. Bolton: It is a good job they have it at this time.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I make this point: At no other port throughout the Commonwealth is wheat handled by a port authority. Elsewhere it is handled by pri-

vate interests. At all other ports those private interests handle bagged and bulk wheat at a profit to themselves. The Fremantle Harbour Trust does not seek to make a profit out of the handling of wheat.

Hon. G. W. Miles: No, but it makes enough out of its other operations.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I hesitate to think what would happen if every one of our harbours did not show a profit. Mr. Miles represents the North Province, and he must know that all the ports do not make profits. He must know that annually very grave losses are incurred in the provision of port facilities for the North-West. The same applies to various ports elsewhere along the Western Australian coast. If there were no surplus revenue derived from the operations of the Fremantle Harbour Trust, I am afraid the finances of the various port facilities in Western Australia would be at a very low ebb. However, I do not think the question of the finances of our port facilities is involved. There is a principle, which is that the handling authority is entitled to be paid at least the cost it has incurred in the handling of bagged-wheat. I repeat that the Australian Wheat Board is in agreement with us that so long as the charges are based on the cost of handling the wheat, they are quite fair.

As a matter of fact, after the regulation was disallowed last year I got into touch with the chairman of the Australian Wheat Board and explained the position to him. He informed me at the time that the Wheat Board desired fixed charges to be set out rather than that they should be left on the basis of the actual cost, which obviously would vary in accordance with the type of boat loading wheat at any particular time. I submit it would be illogical for this House to say that while it was quite prepared to agree that bulk wheat should be handled at cost, bagged-wheat should be handled at a loss, which loss would increase in the event of the quantity shipped in bags increasing to the extent I believe will be found necessary.

Hon. J. Cornell: The situation does not arise in the other wheat-producing States.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No. The charges at Fremantle will compare favourably with the charges imposed anywhere else.

Hon. G. W. Miles: On wheat only.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am speaking of wheat. Whilst I can understand that Mr. Baxter, in his desire to assist the wheat-growers, is not very particular whether the Fremantle Harbour Trust receives the actual cost of handling bagged-wheat or not, I think that in order to be fair we have to admit that in view of the circumstances I have described there is nothing wrong with the regulation submitted by the Harbour Trust and which Mr. Baxter desires to disallow. In his concluding remarks, the hon. member said the Fremantle Harbour Trust should draft a new set of regulations on a more reasonable basis, and that anything reasonable would not be objected to. I submit to him and the House that so long as the charges which the Fremantle Harbour Trust makes for the handling of bagged-wheat are based on the actual cost and no more, there cannot be anything more reasonable. Seeing that the regulation which the hon. member desires to disallow is actually based on cost, and perhaps a little lower than cost, there is no reason why this House should support him in his desire to disallow it.

HON. G. W. MILES (North): I support the motion. Whilst the Minister has put up an argument with respect to wheat alone, I pointed out on a previous occasion that our protest was concerning the Harbour Trust being used as a taxing machine. Particularly would I refer to an instance of a plant used in connection with clover seed which cost 18s. to ship at Adelaide but £6 to take off the wharf at Fremantle. The Government takes no notice of these objections, but goes on in the same old way. The particular machine to which I refer in connection with clover seed is used by farmers to enrich their land to enable them to grow the wheat that is now being talked about. The growing of clover puts nitrogen into the soil and assists the farmer to get out his wheat crop.

Hon. T. Moore: There is the fertiliser, too.

Hon. G. W. MILES: I admit that fertiliser is required. The Government does not take these things into consideration. It is all very well to talk about wheat handling. When a man is in business he may lose money on the sugar he sells but make a profit out of the butter or some other commodity.

The Chief Secretary: This is not a question of selling anything.

Hon. G. W. MILES: No, it is a question of policy which this and other Governments have adopted with the Fremantle Harbour Trust. The money that the Harbour Trust makes the farmers and the general community pay. It is all very well to say that £90,000 has gone into Consolidated Revenue as a result of the activities of the Fremantle Harbour Trust. So long as the Government declines to take these matters into consideration I shall, as I did before, vote for the disallowance of the regulation. No doubt, from the point of view of the Chief Secretary and the Fremantle Harbour Trust, the arguments advanced are very logical, but it is not fair to the people of this country that the Trust should be run in this way. I have quoted one instance and can produce the necessary documents, but no notice was taken of that. The Fremantle Harbour Trust is bleeding the taxpayers and the producers of this country. I support the motion.

HON. J. CORNELL (South): I listened with interest to the Chief Secretary's remarks on the handling of wheat. He made out a good case. It is said that wheels turn slowly but surely. The war has had an effect upon the wheat handling business in this State. It may be said that in Western Australia almost exclusively we had reached a stage when all our wheat was being handled in bulk—though not so in the case of Esperance wheat. As the Chief Secretary has pointed out, the situation that has arisen here does not arise in the other States. There is no bulk handling in Victoria or South Australia, all wheat being handled in bags there, and 60 per cent. of the wheat in New South Wales is handled in bags. The situation that arises here, therefore, does not arise in those States. The irony of the whole thing is this: On the figures quoted by the Chief Secretary it would appear that the grower of wheat in this State is to a great extent hoist on his own petard. More money is given for wheat in bags than for wheat in bulk.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: That is to pay for the bags.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Our wheat now has to be handled in bags owing to the exigencies of war. The price charged is more than enough to compensate for the bags. Because of the parts of the globe to which our wheat

is sent, it must be shipped in bags, and in order to get rid of our wheat we must act accordingly. That is the principle being followed throughout the Commonwealth. Western Australia has to revert to the bag system otherwise it would be cluttered up with wheat. In the process of that reversion, is the general community going to meet the cost, or is the grower expected to do so? Someone must pay the cost of reconditioning the wheat, and I do not see why the whole community should be saddled with it. There are sections of the community which have gained no benefit from the war effort. I refer particularly to those on fixed incomes. The man who grows wheat, however, has benefited a good deal, though not as much as I would like to see. He has had better conditions than he had in pre-war days. It is a question of justice and fairness. I am going to support the retention of the regulation. Someone has to meet the cost; otherwise the whole cost would be charged to the Western Australian section of the Australian Wheat Board.

The Chief Secretary: It is a charge upon the Australian Wheat Board, the whole of Australia.

Hon. J. CORNELL: That is the point the Chief Secretary did not make clear, and it strengthens my argument. The cost is debited to the whole of the wheatgrowers of Australia, and not to the growers of Western Australia in particular. If the Harbour Trust is permitted to impose this charge the cost will be debited to the Australian Wheat Board, and the farmers of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia who export their wheat in bags, will be saddled with some of the cost of reconditioning the wheat in Western Australia. If we disallowed the regulation, the cost would have to be paid by the general taxpayer of this State, and no-one else.

Hon. A. Thomson: What would it cost the general taxpayer if the loss were spread over all the taxpayers in this State?

Hon. J. CORNELL: As it is, the cost will be spread over the four wheatgrowing States in Australia.

Hon. H. L. Roche: What is your authority for that statement?

Hon. J. CORNELL: The Minister is my authority, and he does not tell untruths.

Hon. T. Moore: The cost is spread.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The cost is spread over the wheat-producing States through the Australian Wheat Board. I shall stand by the regulation.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central): We might now get back to the protest against these increased charges. On a previous occasion a debate on this subject occupied the time of the House for several hours. The Chief Secretary stated a fact, with which we all agree, when he said there was a big principle at stake in this matter. The sooner that principle is recognised and made clear the better will it be not only for Western Australia but the Commonwealth as a whole. The principle is: Are the producers to be penalised for the products which they grow and which help to keep the revenue of the State buoyant, or is this to be made a sectional charge such as might be applied to any public utility? Is the small population at one of our sidings to be charged with the cost of the education of its children; for, if so, the position so far as education in the country is concerned will be much worse than it is at present? Are the people who go out to pioneer our primary industries to be charged with the cost of rail facilities extended to them; for, if so, the railways will show a bigger loss than ever?

We want to keep that principle in mind. No doubt it was in the mind of the Chief Secretary, although he did not dig down far enough to strike it. It is an impossible proposition. Mr. Miles quoted one glaring instance showing how inconsistent these charges are. It is perfectly fair to ask, is the Fremantle Harbour Trust operating at a total loss or at a profit to the taxpayers of the State? It is clear that the operations are profitable, but many of us think that the Trust is showing too great a profit. As has been said, it has been used as a taxing machine. I am going to vote for the disallowance of the regulation, not on the ground of consistency, but because I think we were as justified in doing what we did last session as we shall be in doing it this session. Are we sincere when we say we want to assist people who have, I maintain, had a run of unparalleled bad seasons and poor prices? Are we genuine when we say we want to assist them? Here is a way in which we can assist them without doing anyone much harm. For that reason I support the motion.

On motion by Hon. V. Hamersley, debate adjourned.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Ninth Day.

Debate resumed from the 24th August.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [5.14]: I desire to associate myself with the congratulations that have been extended during this debate to our colleagues who faced the electors a few months ago and were returned. Their return is a tribute to the good work which the Legislative Council is doing and is a reply to those people who seem to find delight in asserting that the existence of this House is not justified. It is fitting at this time that we should record our profound gratification at the magnificent feat of arms of the forces of our Empire and her Allies in every theatre of the war. Following upon long anxious days of bitter struggles and many disappointments, complete victory, in Europe at all events, is now clearly on the horizon.

The way to the return of peace and good order is clearer today than it has been at any time during the past five years. Our gratitude should also go out to those who have toiled and suffered in the defence of that precious thing which we call liberty. We should be thankful to the men and women, from the grand old leader of the British Empire, Winston Churchill, down to the men and women engaged in the humblest work associated with the war, for their services. We are nearing the end, we believe, and already some of the Axis rats—or, as Mr. Roosevelt termed them recently, jackals—are leaving the sinking Germanic ship. They are leaving those who have been not only world oppressors but even their own oppressors, those people who so glibly and so wickedly proclaimed themselves the master race.

For five years the world has had, as its daily portion, never-ending stories of revolting treatment of innocent non-combatants, cruelty immeasurable and misery almost beyond conjecture. War, according to its own laws, is barbarous enough in itself, but ever since the early days of September, 1939, Germany and her satellites have created new records and plumbed new depths of savagery and inhumanity. Now the day of reckoning and retribution approaches. At the risk of being termed perhaps a little blood-thirsty,

I sincerely hope that on this occasion—for a change—wherever possible fitting and adequate punishment will be meted out to the responsible criminals. Our own penal code exacts dire punishment for the poor wretch who steals a loaf of bread to keep his body and soul together. How much more should it be insisted upon that those responsible for the war should be compelled to make the fullest atonement for their revolting crimes?

Hon. G. B. Wood: What would you do with them?

Hon. W. J. MANN: There are many things I would do with them, but I think the time is hardly opportune, nor indeed is it sufficiently long, for me to give expression to them. Doubtless some persons will begin to talk of generosity to the fallen foe and misplaced humbug of that kind. They are usually the people who have suffered little and lost less. We should quickly and clearly put those people in their place when they begin to air their views. I make no apology for demanding that adequate punishment be meted out in the highest degree.

Hon. J. Cornell: There is only one appropriate punishment.

Hon. W. J. MANN: If the criminals get proper punishment the world would be satisfied, and that is all I suggest they should receive. In the words of Gilbert and Sullivan, I ask that the punishment be made to fit the crime. Even the good old Book warns such people that they should not expect to escape the consequences when they bring upon the world catastrophe and calamity. My recollection of the Scriptures may be a little hazy, but I remember a clear statement to the effect that those who seek to rule by the sword shall perish by the sword.

Hon. J. Cornell: That is the proper punishment.

Hon. W. J. MANN: That is the dictum we should see is followed. Getting away from the war for a moment, there is something peculiar in the mentality of people who, no matter how revolting a crime may be and how it may outrage all the canons of decency, get up and say, "Poor chap, we should be sorry for him. Forgive him." And let him do it again! I am glad I do not belong to that class. It is right that we should declare ourselves on these matters and so encourage those who will have to undertake great tasks when the war is

ended. We should not tolerate any morbid snivelling or fuddled sentiment on this matter; we should be clear and definite and say just what we think ought to be done. That is my contribution, for the time being, to that phase of post-war retribution.

Dealing with the Lieut.-Governor's Speech there is little in it that is new. Reference is made to the erection by the State of wood distillation and charcoal iron plants. I am particularly pleased about the latter, because I believe that on this side of the Australian continent we shall see the time when an industry will be established requiring the production of iron and steel. I have for many years for that reason advocated the establishment of such a plant. I have also advocated the utilisation of portions of our forests for wood distillation. The Speech also deals with the production of coal at Collie. May I be forgiven if I dwell for a few minutes on that important industry? Coal is of vital importance to the State and we shall recognise that fact to a very much greater degree in the near future than we have done in the past. In the future men may get light and power from the sun's rays.

I read quite recently of some experiments, unfortunately unsuccessful in that direction; but I am of the opinion that one day some bright mind will discover a means of providing these great essentials of modern life. In the meantime we have to make use of what we have and depend upon coal, mineral oil, petroleum, natural gas and water power. Unfortunately, we have no mineral oil available, although much money has been expended in the search for it; nor have we any natural gas, except the type produced by certain gentlemen at times—but that is not of much use for power purposes! Coal is the only substance of which there is sufficient available to provide the power, heat and light which we require at the present time. Certainly in some of the smaller centres of the State coal is not used, but I am speaking of the bigger centres, except the goldfields. Mr. Cornell earlier in this debate referred to the growing problem of the goldmines with regard to fuel requirements.

Hon. J. Cornell: There is no doubt about that.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I am hopeful that even the difficulties at present in the way of providing coal for our goldmines may be

overcome and that it will yet be possible to utilise coal for their fuel requirements. I think I am right in saying that the value of the coal produced in this State is second only to that of the returns from our gold-mining industry. The two could well work together. The Lieut.-Governor's Speech does not tell us, but it is a fact that at the present time investigations are being made close to Perth to demonstrate definitely the added value of the coal mined at Collie. I am credibly informed that tar, two types of gas and two grades of lubricating oil—light and heavy—have already been extracted from Collie coal.

With a comparatively small expenditure on additional plant, I am sure that these useful products will be available on a profitable and commercial basis. I have been invited to go within the next few days to see how far these experiments have progressed. That this work is being done is a matter for extreme congratulation. The man carrying out these experiments is making them because the Government has wisely, in my opinion, made sufficient money available for the purpose. If what is promised can be achieved, it will be a matter for congratulation from us all. While on the subject of coal production, I noticed in the Press a couple of days ago that the Government had appointed a new Superintendent of Mines. I do not know Mr. Foxall, but I do know that men who are acquainted with him and have worked with him, have a very high opinion of his capabilities.

The Chief Secretary: He is the new State Mining Engineer, not the Superintendent of Mines.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I am sorry; I intended to say "State Mining Engineer." I congratulate that gentleman on his appointment and also the State upon having secured the services of a man who, apparently, is acceptable to most of the big mining interests. When I say "most" I do not make the qualification because of any antipathy, but I want to make a plea for the appointment of an engineer—not a State Mining Engineer exactly, but an officer more highly placed than an inspector—to deal with the coal industry. I think the time is ripe for such an appointment. All the difference in the world exists between coalmining and gold-mining. They are poles apart and have altogether different problems. So far as my observations indicate, the industry at Collie has gone along quietly and successfully in

the past, not because of the technical assistance afforded by successive administrators of the Mines Department, but because of the knowledge and practical experience of the mine managers and the senior miners. I believe that to them the credit is mostly due for the progress the coalmining industry has made in this State, from the point of view of production.

We have been particularly fortunate in the past in having in the collieries men who had long experience in other countries, and who know coalmining in all its ramifications. They assisted to build up this important industry. As coalmining is destined to play an ever-increasing part in our national economy, we should urge the Government to make an early appointment of a superintendent of coalmining. The man to be so appointed should be one who has had experience of coalmining in all its phases and could plan and direct its extensions on sound lines. I am satisfied that we have in the State men—and I make this statement after contact with some engaged in all branches of coalmining—who could be appointed to the position. There would be no necessity to go outside the State to make the selection. There are men employed on the field who, I believe, have all the necessary qualifications.

By creating this position we should develop a real coalmining policy. We have not had one to date. The recent appointment of an advisory coal panel was a step in that direction, but I believe there is a real necessity for the appointment of a man who could devote the whole of his energies to the coalfields. A tremendous lot must be done there yet. The Speech makes reference to the open cut at the Stockton, and to the new Wyvern mine. Members would be well advised to see, if possible, both these phases of coalmining. I recently made a trip—not the first by a good number—in order to see these two plants in operation. Both the open cut and the Wyvern colliery were sponsored by the Government, and I believe they are thoroughly justified. At the Stockton there is a huge deposit of coal which is being hauled out by machinery at a rate not possible under ordinary mining conditions. I understand that the colliery plant at the Wyvern, when completed, will be the most mechanised in this State, and will be equal to anything that can be found in other mines in Australia.

These factors in themselves are evidence of the vital importance of an industry that can make or mar a country. We can see what is happening in the Eastern States at present when men refuse to work and the Government is so spineless and weak-kneed that it does everything, in my opinion at any rate, but see that they work. As a result we read of the curtailment of trains, the curtailment of domestic gas supplies, and the hold-up of industry generally. Let us pray God that that never happens here! The value of the coalmining industry is great, and I make no apology for speaking of it. I hope that the Government will take some notice of the suggestion that we appoint a man who will be able to increase its value to the State. I notice that housing is one of the popular questions these days, and that the Commonwealth Parliament is going to expend an enormous sum in providing homes for the people. I subscribe to the contention that it should be possible for every man and woman to acquire a home. That is one of the first essentials to a satisfied and progressive community.

Hon. G. B. Wood: I thought they could not do that if the people did not vote "Yes" at the Referendum.

Hon. W. J. MANN: The hon. member will find that he should not take too much notice of promises or, shall I say, threats. During the past few weeks we have had bushels of threats. I, for one, was not very concerned about them. The only thing I fear when threats are made is that unthinking people may be led astray. However, I had better not proceed on those lines or I shall be getting a little bit astray myself. I hope that under this housing scheme the authorities will build homes, and not apologies for homes. I was recently in the suburb of Leighton or Mosman Park—I am not sure of the exact locality—where I saw a row of buildings, and they were described to me as workers' homes. But they were shocking examples of homes. They were built on some antiquated plan so that they all looked alike.

Hon. J. Cornell: That does not apply to the workers' homes only.

Hon. W. J. MANN: If they were not built under the Workers' Homes Scheme I stand corrected, but I know that they were an eyesore. I hope that the Government, in the erection of homes, will not subscribe to the idea of building the cheap-

est possible house, and then expect the tenant to be satisfied. The people will not be satisfied with poor homes. We saw that in the early stages of the Group Settlement Scheme. We remember the shocking houses that were then erected.

Hon. J. Cornell: In the early stages of the War Service Homes Scheme, too.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Most of them had cracks in the walls through which one could put one's hand, and the roofs were not even shelters from ordinary rains. I am not criticising this post-war housing scheme, because I believe that with proper safeguards it is wise. I want to see that it is not only wise but also satisfactory. One of the results of insufficiency of housing can be seen in some of the largest towns, especially where there are high schools. Bunbury is a striking example. It is almost impossible to secure accommodation in Bunbury for boys and girls from outlying districts who desire to enter the high school. The accommodation is simply not available. The difficulty is being overcome to some extent by the institution of bus services for those who live within easy distance of the town, but this will not cope with the problem and I think the only possible solution will be the provision of hostels in order that these children may secure accommodation and also the education provided for them. In March last a conference was held at Bunbury and some very vigorous criticism was levelled at the Government because it had failed to make any provision in this direction. I add my support to any activity along those lines. In these days we have to ensure that every possible facility is provided for educating the rising generation.

The rains that have recently fallen throughout the agricultural districts are a matter for congratulation. The absence of the normal winter rains caused considerable anxiety amongst farmers, but it seems that after all there is a prospect of our getting a reasonably bountiful harvest. In my province we are not much worried about the rainfall. Providence is very good to us, and we are grateful. But there are other things that press hardly upon some of the people making a living there. I am appearing in a new role this afternoon. As a rule I have something to say about the dairying and kindred industries, but recently some of the poultry farmers thought that I might be useful to voice the disabilities they are suf-

fering. Poultry farms do not loom very largely in the South-West, although there is a fair number nearer Perth. Some of the points I am going to mention are Commonwealth matters, but I think these men are entitled to have their complaints against the Commonwealth ventilated in this House.

Not many months ago the Commonwealth was frantically urging poultry raisers to increase their stocks considerably and step up the production of eggs. They were offered all sorts of inducements to do so; promises galore were made; they were assured that there would be no possible chance of failure to secure the best market and to be able to operate on lines that would be highly profitable. I have a letter dated the 14th December, 1943, signed by the Federal Minister for Commerce, Mr. Scully, written to a man in the poultry raising business. The letter says—

I can assure you that there is no likelihood of a glut of eggs for some years to come, and one of my problems is to stimulate production to a level which will enable heavy demands to be met. It is safe to assume that with the introduction of meat rationing the demand for eggs by the civil population will increase.

There is a definite promise to a man that he would be safe in making all the extensions, possible. Yet I am informed that, in spite of this, neither the Department of Commerce nor any other Federal department has done anything to help these people. On the other hand the contention is that the Commonwealth, by negligence, has contributed to hampering them seriously. One of the complaints is that it is essential—as we all know—for the proper conduct of the industry to have a steady supply of bran, pollard and meatmeal, and in the season when the young stock is coming along, of dried buttermilk. I am assured that it is practically impossible to obtain the two last-mentioned except in feeding mashes put up by merchants and that a position has developed whereby a monopoly prevents these people from purchasing in the market in the manner they desire.

One would think that it would be a simple matter for a poultry farmer having from 1,000 to 5,000 birds to purchase wheat for them, either from the farmer direct or from the pool. I understand that it is practically impossible for these men to buy their wheat from the pool if they want a sufficiency of

bran, pollard and meatmeal because the firms handling the offal and the meatmeal have control of the supply and they say to the poultry farmer, "Unless you purchase your wheat from us, you do not get any bran and pollard. Alternatively you may get all you want of bran and pollard if you purchase it from us in the shape of bran mash." Regarding the price of wheat I want to quote again from Mr. Scully's letter—

In connection with wheat, arrangements have been made for poultry farms to buy direct from the Wheat Board at 3s. 6¾d. bagged in truck lots. Should you not wish to buy a truck load of wheat at a time, it should be possible for you to co-operate with a neighbouring poultry farmer to split a truck so as to benefit by the special price. In your State, where the wheat is held in bulk, the Wheat Board charges at the rate of 3s. 3¾d. per bushel, and will bag the wheat free of cost if bags are supplied by you.

Following on the statement in the concluding part of that paragraph, this man wrote to the Trustees of the Wheat Pool and their reply was—

Regarding your inquiry if it is possible for you to take empty bags to North Wharf, and the Australian Wheat Board to bag bulk wheat for you, we placed your request before the State Superintendent of the Australian Wheat Board, who has now written to us, saying that he regrets that he cannot allow this to be done as labour and machinery are the factors governing the position at North Wharf today.

This shows that the promise of the Federal Minister has not been kept. I have something even more important than that to bring before the House. The Federal Minister spoke of wheat at 3s. 3¾d. I made inquiries today and I understand that wheat can be bought for about 2s. 11½d.

Hon. G. B. Wood: It might not be f.a.q. wheat.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I have an invoice of about the same date for 60 bags of wheat at 4s. 3d. per bushel, a total of £37 4s. 9d.

Hon. L. Craig: Would that include freight?

Hon. W. J. MANN: It might. I understand that the 3s. 3¾d. was for wheat delivered in the city, and that the only cartage required was from the railway station to the man's farm. Be that as it may, there should not be a difference of 1s. per bushel almost for cartage.

Hon. L. Craig: The price may depend on the grade of wheat.

Hon. W. J. MANN: True, but f.a.q. wheat would be the quality required by poultry farmers. I am quoting the Minister's figures; I am not an authority. Members can have a look at the Minister's figures if they choose.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Wheat at 3s. 3d. for fowls is good wheat.

Hon. W. J. MANN: As regards that wheat the Commonwealth Government has not done what it promised to do. The poultry people tell me that from long years of experience they have evolved formulas for the feeding of their stock which are most suitable in the respective districts; and they complain that the prepared foods which are put up are not suited to every district. Consequently they consider they should be permitted to purchase in the open market, and mix their own mash instead of being forced to buy certain brands. I have a letter from another poultry-farmer showing that on the 21st of this month he ordered from a Fremantle merchant one ton of bran and one ton of pollard, but was told that there was none of either available. He was further informed that he could have up to ten tons of prepared mash consisting of a mixture of bran, pollard and meatmeal.

This shows how the commercial poultry-farmer is being left without the ingredients necessary to mix his stock food, and thus is forced on to prepared commodities which are not always of great use to him. There again conditions are anything but satisfactory. With regard to dried butter-milk, not one bag of bran is available to the poultry-farmer. It has all got into the hands of a couple of concerns which are doing just as they please. If the Commonwealth Government is really desirous of assisting the poultry industry, it should take up this matter of foodstuffs without delay.

Another grievance of the poultry-farmer relates to prices. At the time Mr. Scully's letter was written, the poultry-farmers were assured of a net price round about 1s. 9d. per dozen for eggs. This price, I understand, they have never received. The price has stood at 1s. 9d., but out of that had to be met 1d. per dozen for candling and deductions for two or three other things, bringing the price down to below or bordering on 1s. 7d. Therefore these people consider they have been let down. Yesterday's "West Australian" had a paragraph stating that

the price for the farmer has fallen to 1s. 6d. It is rather interesting to note that this matter should have waited until the Referendum was over. Mr. Scully's terms included an assurance that there was no likelihood of a fall in prices for some years to come; and yet, within a few weeks of the making of that statement, the price is reduced by 3d. per dozen to the consumer and also, of course, to the producer, on the ground that eggs are plentiful, that the Commonwealth Government will take all the eggs it can, and that the surplus will be utilised for drying.

And here is yet another grievance. Amounts of 3d. and 4d. per dozen are deducted for cracked eggs, and then there is 1d. per dozen for candling, and a further 1d. for central funds. Each egg taken to the drying works is broken into a separate container before it is put into the tray for drying purposes. Thus there is no necessity to candle them. Poultry farmers complain also of unfair practices in the disposal of their poultry. They say a fair maximum price is fixed, but no minimum price whatever. One man assured me that he had 800 birds which he kept until they were beautiful stock, and that, as the result of certain people putting their heads together, those birds had to be sold by weight at 4d. per lb. while the public was probably paying 2s. per lb. If a maximum price is fixed, it is only fair that there should be some minimum fixed.

Hon. L. Craig: They are being offered at 1s. 2d.

Hon. W. J. MANN: If the Commonwealth Government had been half as solicitous for this phase of primary production as it professed to be, it would have seen that when a maximum price was fixed, the producer was protected by a minimum price. The present practice is rotten. The producers affected are comparatively only a handful, but they have laid out their cash and worked in a seven-days-a-week industry, which is worse than dairying. The poultry-farmer is kept on the job for ever. I would have liked to make extended reference to the report of the Rural Reconstruction Commission, but that can stand over to some other time. Further, I would have liked to refer to the mining for base metals that is going on in the South-West, where the production of one metal in particular has proved of such

outstanding value to the war economy. Then there is the matter of a power scheme for the South-West, but that also can stand over. I support the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

On motion by Hon. G. B. Wood, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.11 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 29th August, 1944.

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

ELECTORAL—SWEARING-IN OF MEMBER.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am prepared to swear in the member for Victoria Park, who was returned at the last general election.

Mr. Raphael took and subscribed the oath and signed the roll.

QUESTIONS (3).

ICE.

As to Supplies at Dalkeith.

Hon. N. KEENAN asked the Minister for Health:

(1) Is he aware that mothers living in Dalkeith, having babies and young children to look after, cannot obtain ice for keeping

milk and food in good condition during hot weather owing, it is alleged, to manpower shortage?

(2) In view of the grave risk to health arising will he make representations to the proper authority to remedy the position?

(3) If no remedy by supplying manpower is practicable, will he take steps to have the district zoned so as to make existing supply cover the greatest possible area?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The Minister is only aware of the alleged position by a complaint of a resident, through the member for Nedlands.

(2) Inquiries from the authorities controlling the issue of petrol and tyres indicate that shortages in those lines are at the root of it.

(3) Inquiries are being made into the position.

WHEAT.

As to Supplies to Pig Producers.

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is he aware whether it is the intention of the Australian Wheat Board to continue next season the supply of wheat at cheap rates to bacon and pig producers?

(2) If not, will he make enquiries immediately in order that these producers may budget accordingly regarding next year's production?

(3) Does he not consider, however, that the proper course for the Commonwealth Government to adopt if the supply of wheat at cheap rates to such producers is to be maintained, would be for the Commonwealth Government to pay to the Wheat Board in the interests of those dependent on wheat-growing, the difference between the price charged to such bacon and pig producers and the actual market value of wheat from time to time?

(4) Will he, in the interests of wheat-growers generally, make urgent representations along these lines to the Federal Ministers responsible?

(5) If not, why not?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST replied:

(1) Advice has not been received yet.

(2) Yes. However, the aspect of security has been stressed already as a factor for increased production.