

vate enterprise with buses or the Government buses to undertake the work of providing a transport system for those settlers. That relates to only one area. We have practically the same state of affairs at the Mundaring end of the district. Mundaring is only a little over 20 miles from Perth and the train service is much better than that provided on the Upper Darling Range branch. Still, it is a poor service and on Sunday there is no service whatever. People in that area, particularly in summer when they desire to go to the beaches for surfing and swimming, have no means except their own transport of getting there. I have mentioned some of the troubles in getting electric current into those districts, and I hope the Government will make a bigger effort to obtain the manpower and material so urgently needed for those works.

Mr. J. Hegney: Would the patronage be there for a Sunday service?

Mr. OWEN: Yes, there would be the patronage for a train, but I think the district could be better served by a bus, because it would be more mobile and could choose its own route for picking up passengers.

Mr. J. Hegney: How far does the bus run on Sunday?

Mr. OWEN: To Glen Forrest; not to Mundaring. I omitted earlier in my remarks to offer my congratulations to the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Railways and the Chairman of Committees on their appointment to those offices. I believe that the ability and capacity which they have displayed for hard work and which brought them promotion will have excellent scope in the near future. We have had much experience of the capabilities of the Premier and the Deputy Premier, and as to the new Minister for Railways, I can honestly say that if he succeeds in instilling into the Railway Department and its train service some part of the speed of delivery and despatch with which he conducted the business as Chairman of Committees, he will do a great service for the State.

Mr. Seward: I am afraid there would be a breakdown.

Mr. OWEN: As to the new Chairman of Committees, I fully expect that when the House resolves into Committee he will conduct the proceedings with the customary dis-

patch and that the work will be in quite capable hands.

On motion by Mr. Fox, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.17 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 30th August, 1945.

Question	PAGE
: Railways—(a) as to land resumption south of river	455
(b) As to fire damage to adjacent properties	456
(c) As to refrigerated vans for perishables	456
(d) As to Kalgoorlie-Fremantle standard line route	456
(e) As to quality of refreshments at Chidlow	456
Tractors, as to provisions for local authorities	457
Pardelup prison escapees, as to thefts and supervision	457
Police, as to personnel and new stations	457
Wool, as to agreement with Britain	457
Leave of absence	458
Address-in-reply, fourteenth day, conclusion	458
Bills: Soil Conservation, 1R.	488
Closer Settlement Act Amendment, 1R.	488
Mine Workers' Relief (War Service) Act Amendment, 1R.	488
Mines Regulation Act Amendment, 1R.	488
Electoral Act Amendment, 1R.	488
Constitution Acts Amendment (No. 1), 1R.	488
Constitution Acts Amendment (No. 2), 1R.	488
National Fitness, 1R.	488
Government Employees (Promotions Appeal Board), 1R.	488
Motor Vehicle (Third Party Insurance) Act Amendment, 1R.	488
Rights in Water and Irrigation Act Amendment, 1R.	488

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

QUESTIONS.

RAILWAYS.

(a) *As to Land Resumption South of River.*

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Works:

1, At what period was land first resumed in anticipation of a south side of river railway in the vicinity of East Fremantle?

2, What was the total sum spent on this anticipation?

3, Is the area so resumed still in the possession of the State?

The MINISTER replied:

1, 1902.

2, £59,362 expended over whole of route from Cottesloe to Fremantle. Approximately £39,000 referred to purchases south of the river.

3, Portion only. The Commonwealth Government has acquired land at Preston Point for the Naval Depot. Other proper-

ties both on the north and south side of the river have been resold and land dedicated for other State purposes, including Workers' Homes Board and "A" class reserves.

(b) As to Fire Damage to Adjacent Properties.

Mr. LESLIE asked the Minister for Railways:

1, How many (a) crop, (b) pasture, (c) bush fires on farm properties adjacent to railway lines were reported or noted for the period October, 1944, to May, 1945, inclusive?

2, Was any estimate made of damage to crops, pastures and fencing by such fires?

3, Were any claims made against the department for compensation for damage and loss from such fires on the grounds that they were caused by the department's engines? If so, how many claims, and for how much?

4, How many complaints, as distinct from claims, were received by the department alleging that such fires were caused by the department's engines?

5, Were any claims for compensation paid, and if so, how many and how much?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) Crop 10, (b) Pasture 122, (c) Bush 21, (d) Crop and pasture 12, (e) Pasture and bush 11, (f) Crop and bush 1; total 177. Many were of a minor nature and in numerous instances pasture was poor.

2, Yes, concerning 46 properties.

3, Yes, 50, of which 37 claimed a total of £5,301; 13 stated no amount.

4, Four.

5, Yes, seven, totalling £429. In addition, eight claims were paid compensation totalling £717, as a result of burning-off operations. Four claims for similar damage are pending.

(c) As to Refrigerated Vans for Perishables.

Mr. HOLMAN asked the Minister for Railways:

1, Has any consideration been given to the necessity of providing refrigerated transportation for whole milk, butter and other perishable goods from the South-West district to Perth?

2, If so, what progress has been made to institute this service?

The MINISTER replied:

1, Yes.

2, Various methods of refrigeration have been investigated, but the traffic offering has not warranted the heavy capital costs involved by their adoption. Insulated vans, with and without ice boxes, have been in use for some years. Investigations will continue to be made and improvements effected as and when possible.

(d) As to Kalgoorlie-Fremantle Standard Line Route.

Mr. McDONALD asked the Minister for Railways:

1, Has the route of the proposed standard gauge railway from Kalgoorlie to Fremantle been settled?

2, If so—(a) What is the route; (b) by what authority was it settled?

3, If the route has not been settled what route or routes are under consideration?

4, When does the Government propose that this House shall discuss the route and the costs and other factors relative to the suggested standard gauge line?

The MINISTER replied:

1, No. For the purpose of preparing estimates, a route has been selected as being the most suitable.

2, (a) Kalgoorlie to Northam, paralleling the existing 3ft. 6in. line, thence to Perth via Toodyay and the Avon Valley, with an independent goods road from Bassendean to North Fremantle. (b) Answered by No. 1.

3, Answered by No. (2).

4, By decision of the Premiers' Conference last week, two committees are to be appointed to report on vital aspects of the unification of railway gauges as affecting States and Commonwealth. Until these committees are appointed and their reports received, there are no definite proposals before the States.

(e) As to Quality of Refreshments at Chidlow.

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Railways:

1, Is he aware of the poor quality of the refreshments that are being supplied to the travelling public at Chidlow railway station?

2, Will he take action to have an improvement made?

3, If not, why not?

The MINISTER replied:

1, No. Frequent inspections of this room are made to ensure that a satisfactory standard is maintained by the lessee.

2, and 3, Any specific complaint regarding this room will be investigated.

TRACTORS.

As to Provision for Local Authorities.

Mr. MANN asked the Minister for Works:

1, Are any tractors or power graders available to local authorities for purchase for road work?

2, If so, where and how can they be obtained?

3, If not, is there any likelihood of their being available in the near future, and if so, when?

4, If not, have representations been made for this machinery to be made available in this State?

5, If not, will such representations be made at once?

The MINISTER replied:

1, Not at present.

2, See answer to No. 1.

3, This will depend upon the ability to import such machinery into the State.

4 and 5, Strong representations have been made on several occasions. The State Government itself is continually endeavouring to obtain tractors and power graders, particularly for use by the Main Roads Department.

PARDELUP PRISON ESCAPEES.

As to Thefts and Supervision.

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister representing the Chief Secretary:

1, What is the criminal record of the prisoner, H. L. Carroll, who recently escaped from Pardelup Prison farm?

2, On whose instructions was this prisoner removed to Albany gaol for custody?

3, Is it a fact that on or about the night of Wednesday, the 15th August (i.e., approximately one week before the escape of certain prisoners from Mt. Barker lock-up) three cans of cream from a farm near Pardelup, a motor vehicle from another, and a quantity of goods from a store at Narrikup were stolen by Pardelup prisoners who, nevertheless, were present at roll call next morning?

4, What number of prisoners were held at Pardelup on the 15th August, and how many had two or more convictions?

5, What number of warders were on the prison staff that day?

6, Does it not appear that much stricter supervision should be exercised at Pardelup, and the staff increased?

The PREMIER replied:

1, (a) Eleven minor offences; (b) twelve months for stealing with violence; (c) three years and to be detained at the Governor's pleasure for demanding money with menaces.

2, The presiding Magistrate ordered that he be segregated from other prisoners.

3, Yes.

4, Thirty-seven, twenty-six of which had two or more convictions, mostly for minor offences.

5, Five.

6, Supervision at Pardelup is constantly receiving the attention of the department including the number of staff required.

POLICE.

As to Personnel and New Stations.

Mr. McLARTY asked the Minister representing the Minister for Police:

1, What is the total personnel of the Police Force?

2, What number of cadets are required to bring the force up to full strength?

3, Is it proposed to call for the necessary number of cadets? If so, when?

4, How many new police stations are to be established, and in what districts?

The PREMIER replied:

1, Present strength 572, including 17 special constables.

2, Forty-three recruits and one cadet.

3, Yes. When suitable returned personnel are available.

4, When it is possible new police stations will be established at Mandurah, Rockingham, Como and Scarborough, and the existing stations at Claremont and Mt. Barker will be replaced with new buildings.

WOOL.

As to Agreement with Britain.

Mr. TRIAT (without notice) asked the Premier:

1, Is he aware of any international discussion or agreement regarding wool?

2, Has he any knowledge of any decision on the question?

3, Can he inform the House of the details of the agreement, if there is one?

The PREMIER replied: In reply to the hon. member's questions, I am aware of a conference that took place in London between the Commonwealth and the Empire wool representatives. The Commonwealth delegation was headed by Mr. Murphy, Secretary to the Department of Commerce, and had attached to it Mr. McFarlane, Secretary to the Treasury and Sir Owen Dixon. I understand that agreement has been reached between the Commonwealth Government and the British Government; but I think the decisions at this stage cannot be made public. The ratification of the agreement is delayed because of the political situation in England and the termination of hostilities. I do not know the terms of the agreement, but until the British Government ratifies it I think they should not be made known.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Wilson, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Hon. P. Collier (Boulder) on the ground of ill-health.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fourteenth Day—Conclusion.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MR. FOX (South Fremantle) [4.40]: If congratulations are not becoming monotonous. I desire to add mine to those of other speakers who have congratulated members on having risen to greater eminence in this Chamber. I hope the ex-Premier will very soon regain his health and strength, and that he will be spared for many years as a member of this Chamber. He can look back over a long life from the time when, as Johnny Willecock, he went out as a call boy, later became a fireman, then an engine-driver, and at length reached the highest position in the land. He has done an excellent job, and his rise shows the possibilities that exist in a democratic country like Australia. I also wish to add my congratulations to those voiced by the member for Mt. Magnet to an officer of this Parliament, Flying Officer Jocelyn Bartlett, who has returned safe and sound to West-

ern Australia after doing a magnificent job over Germany. I understand he gained a distinction. He was over Germany 64 times, and I think we all agree that it is men like our young friend who did so much to bring victory over our enemies. I am sure we are all very glad to see him back, and we hope he will not suffer any ill effects—I do not think he has done so—from the nerve-racking time through which he passed. The other evening the member for Claremont was very pessimistic about the future of the National Party.

Mr. Withers: You mean the Liberal Party.

Mr. FOX: Yes. I suppose we can be forgiven for making a mistake; they change their name so often! I will not make that slip again.

Mr. McLarty: You are starting off in a very nasty mood; but go on!

Mr. FOX: Evidently the member for Claremont galvanised Mr. Menzies into action; or if he did not, perhaps it was something that happened in New Zealand. I will read later what appeared in the New Zealand papers in June. Let me read what the Federal Leader of the Liberal Party had to say after bemoaning the result of the soldiers' vote in the Fremantle by-election. He said—

They must face up to that. There was no doubt that the very clever propaganda of the Government had played an important part in the results. In Fremantle, one could not help noticing that the knowledge that people had of the politics of Canberra was very limited.

That is a gratuitous insult to the people of Fremantle. The report of Mr. Menzies' remarks continues—

He had returned from that State strengthened in the belief that the Liberal Party must have a strong central office, a real Federal Secretariat, which could be responsible for the preparation of publicity material. Mr. Menzies said that they must give extremely close attention to policy and publicity at the meeting of the Liberal Party's Federal Council. Consideration must also be given to primary industries and the party must show that it understood rural problems and was prepared to do something constructive about them.

Just fancy his saying that after 27½ years in office supported by the members of the Country and Democratic Party!

Mr. Withers: What did the President of their Conference say according to this morning's paper?

Mr. FOX: I have not read that. The report continues:—

"If we can present to the people," Mr. Menzies said, "six or eight considered statements on six or eight live issues we would be able to satisfy the minds of hundreds of thousands of good people who are still sceptical about us although they want to be with us."

I think the days of the Tantalooona tiger and the sanctity of the home have long since passed.

Mr. Abbott: Do you not believe in the sanctity of the home?

Mr. FOX: Not in the way the hon. member's Party put it up with a view to bamboozling the people. So far as that is concerned I believe in what Bobby Burns said—

In Virtue's heavenly road,
The cottage leaves the palace far behind.

Mr. Mann: Bobby Burns was a bit of a doer himself!

Mr. FOX: Bob'ly Burns sought to show that the home was more sacred to humble folk than to rich people. However, that is just by the way. I now propose to read what appeared in a New Zealand paper in June.

Mr. McLarty: Give us some more about Mr. Menzies.

Mr. FOX: I could give the hon. member a lot more about him, but it would not be palatable. This paragraph that appeared in the New Zealand paper has the heading, "The Choking Hand" and it reads—

The plan to raise a national fighting fund for the restoration and preservation of free enterprise in New Zealand was endorsed at a meeting of the Auckland Chamber of Commerce yesterday, and it was decided to set up a committee to carry out Auckland's part in the £25,000 publicity campaign, to spread over the next 18 months. The whole position calls for immediate action by all business people, big and small, said Mr. H. J. Lichtenstein, of the Chamber, in a statement issued after the meeting. The choking hand of totalitarianism must be snatched away before it finally throttles.

I suppose that, before the war, all those people were talking about the new order after the war. Now they are all back to talk about pre-war conditions, back to the dole and everything associated with it. If they are going to raise £25,000 in New Zealand with a population of 1,500,000, on a population basis the amount raised in Australia would be £135,000. We can imagine

the amount of "tripe" that is going to be poured out over the next 18 months. There will be tons of it. I think the people of Australia realise now that the conditions they have obtained have not been inherited, but have been won by the fighting on the part of the pioneers who supported the Labour movement years ago; and I do not think this other propaganda is going to have very much effect.

One of the matters that has been most discussed during the debate on the Address-in-reply is the question of housing. The housing problem was very acute 25 years ago. It was acute when the Labour Government brought down the Workers' Homes Act. If that Government had had sufficient money, I am quite sure it would have made a more valuable contribution to the housing scheme than it did. Unfortunately, it did not have borrowing powers until a short time ago, and, the war intervening, very little could be done. If in 1937 another place had not defeated the Bill for the erection of houses to let to tenants, we would have had two years of intense building activity, and that would have done much to relieve the housing shortage. Unfortunately, the other Chamber threw out the Bill and consequently nothing could be done. As has been stated before, in 1925 the National Party set aside £20,000,000 as a building fund; but practically nothing was done. About £1,500,000 was spent. If a determined effort had been made during the depression, the position might have been different. At that time, there were 14,000 men out of work in Western Australia and amongst them there must have been a considerable number of builders and handy men. Think of the amount of building that could have been done with an Army of 6,000 or 8,000 men instead of putting them to scrape grass about the streets and to do other work that was non-productive!

Mr. Abbott: Why was that not done in other States?

Mr. FOX: I have said that the National Government did not do anything in any of the States.

Mr. Mann: Mr. Scullin was the Prime Minister.

Mr. FOX: We have not had a Labour Government in the Federal House for 27 years; not a Labour majority.

Mr. Thorn: Do not be funny!

Mr. FOX: It is exactly the same in Western Australia. We can pass anything here if we have the numbers, but the chap above can boot it out. I could if I liked mention very convincing proof of that in connection with an industry with which I was associated, but I do not want to raise the matter here. The member for Mt. Magnet said that it was very hard for him to understand why the cost of houses had increased. I also find it hard to understand the position. Not far from where I am living three houses were built in 1937. Each of them contained approximately 14 squares, which is about 1,400 square feet. The rooms were very large and had 10ft. 6in. ceilings. The houses were built of weatherboard and asbestos, with back and front verandahs and sleep-out. They cost £540 each. They were beautifully finished, all the work being done in workmanlike style. The man who built them is living in one of them at present.

I do not know if a better finished house could be found anywhere. Each house contains about five rooms—I am not too sure of the exact number—and all conveniences. The ceelite for each of these buildings cost £58, whereas today it would cost £93, which is an increase of 60 per cent.

In addition, the quality of the present ceelite is not nearly so good as that which was put into these houses. One reason for that is that the manufacturers have to use the refuse from the flax to reinforce the material, whereas before the war some imported stuff was used. In 1927, a plain ceiling cost 4s. 6d. a yard and now it costs 7s. 6d., which is an increase of 66 per cent. First-class flooring at that time cost 30s. 6d. per 100 square feet and now it is 35s., or an increase of 15 per cent. If the flooring is ordered in specified lengths, it costs 37s., which represents an increase of 23 per cent. Before the war, no charge was made for specified lengths, but now 2s. extra is charged. During the depression, the timber merchants gave a discount of 25 to 30 per cent. to all builders.

Mr. W. Hegney: That was a trade discount.

Mr. FOX: Yes. There must have been an enormous profit on timber if the millers were able to give such a discount. It would not do any harm if an inquiry were made

to see whether the increased costs of building material are justified. When we take into consideration that the cost of labour has risen by only 15 per cent., I do not think they are. The Government should consider the advisability of building concrete houses. We are not going to catch up with our building needs unless we are able to build more quickly. We cannot build brick or wooden houses as quickly as we can build concrete houses. In the first place, bricklayers are very scarce and they were before the war. Labourers can do all the work in connection with concrete houses, except build the chimneys. For that purpose it would be necessary for a bricklayer to be employed for about three days only. The walls could be run into moulds and erected with a crane. All the work could be done in a shop and they would be cavity-walls and not merely blocks of concrete. The walls would be three inches thick and made in various designs. I am given to understand that this type of house would be £100 cheaper than a brick home.

Mr. Abbott: The Victorian Housing Commission cannot do that.

Mr. FOX: That is the information I received from a builder who was prepared to build a concrete house, as a sample, and throw it open for inspection and exhibition after which the Government could do with it as it liked. He was prepared to buy a block of land and spend his own money on erecting such a home, but he wanted a crane for the purpose and there was no mobile crane in Western Australia that he could get or borrow in order to make this experiment. It would not pay him to buy one to build one house. We got in contact with the Americans, who have some of the best machinery to be seen anywhere, but unfortunately some of their laws prevented their lending such a crane to private people. As a result, we have not been able to do anything up to the present. It would not do any harm if the Government purchased one of these cranes, which would be very useful to the Public Works Department, not only for building concrete houses but for many other purposes. I am sure the Public Works Department could find any amount of work for it.

Another aspect in favour of the concrete house is that at present, I am told, the bricks being supplied are very unsatisfactory. They are not uniform in size, which

makes it difficult for the builders, and they are not uniform in colour. Consequently it is hard to make a good job. The man about whom I am speaking was very anxious to build this home, and I think the Government should do something in this direction. We have not asked the Government to buy a crane so far. I have been looking to see if we can get one. I am satisfied that this type of building lends itself to the speedy erection of numbers of homes. Moulds of difficult patterns can be made into which the concrete can be poured. But after all it is the inside comfort that is the main consideration, and I should say that one of these concrete homes would be as comfortable and as dry as any brick house. Another matter that seems to be causing the building fraternity a great deal of concern is that of building houses by day labour. I hope that when the building trades get together they will show the country that they are able to build houses just as cheaply as can any contractor. I see no reason why they should not.

The building trades should meet and lay down what they consider to be a fair day's work for the average man. It should not be what the fastest worker can do, but what the ordinary tradesman can do comfortably. If it is left to the employer, he will set the pace and, if the others do not come up to his standard, they will be kicked out. We had some experience previously at the Eveleigh Workshops, New South Wales, of what an employer can do with speeding up when the Taylor card system was introduced. I do not know whether many members can recall just what happened, but some of those sitting on my left can. That scheme was responsible for one of the greatest upheavals in Australia. It even reached Western Australia! That was a system under which the movements of each man throughout the day were tabulated, and he was made into a machine, with the consequence that it was considered a man would be thrown on the scrapheap at forty. I believe that every man should do a decent day's work.

If the building trades got together and laid down what they considered a fair day's work, they would be able to show the Government and the people of this State that they could build homes cheaper than could private enterprise. I believe the workmen would be prepared to do that, when

they knew that good work on their part was not going to mean profit to any single employer, but a saving in cost to the men who would be living in the homes. Apart from any saving in the cost of homes, other than building concrete homes, which I think would be a good idea, there could be some reduction in the price of timber and in interest charges. I think the Commonwealth Government should be able to supply money at a very low rate of interest, which would cover the cost of administration and to some extent off-set the high cost of houses at the present time. I know of one man who bought a house for £800 just before the war. He was paying it off at the rate of 25s. per week, and it would take him 35 years to complete his payments, and by that time he would have paid £2,200 for it. It would not be asking too much for the Government to advance money at the lowest possible rate of interest. During the week I saw in the Press a paragraph concerning Dr. Edgar Booth, who was over here as a representative of the International Wool Secretariat. He is reported to have said—

The position at present was that wool remained Australia's most important industry. It was essential that we should have certain commodities which Australia could produce in competition with the rest of the world economically and could export satisfactorily so as to maintain credit overseas. The wool clip was worth annually to Australia about £70,000,000, and it would be worth £80,000,000 per annum. There were types of wool produced in Australia which were unparalleled in any other wool-producing country. It was also necessary to remember that something more than a quarter of the world's wool production was Australian.

I think when an opportunity presents itself for any company to do anything in connection with the manufacturing of woollen articles, every assistance should be given by the Government to a firm anxious to establish a factory, irrespective of where the factory is to be situated. That would be one way to ensure some immigration. Quite a number of oversea Servicemen who are in Australia at present would like to remain here, but some of them say, "You have no big industries in Western Australia. If you had, we would like to stay here and bring some of our relatives out with us. We like the climate and would like very much to settle here." Quite recently the Albany Woollen Mills were desirous of establishing themselves at Fremantle. The Fremantle

City Council gave the company a site of ten acres, but of course it is not merely a question of starting off, and the company wanted the Government to guarantee a bank overdraft. Unfortunately the Government did not see its way clear at the time to fall in with this request, and consequently nothing has happened yet. The company believes that the chance of successfully establishing a mill at Albany is very remote.

In the first place, the cost of freight on the manufactured article between Albany and Perth is just about the same as between Melbourne and Fremantle. The cost of electric power at Albany in 1939 was 1½d. per unit, compared with .75d. in Melbourne and .9d. at Fremantle, so if assistance is not given by way of an increased overdraft, the mill, in all probability, will be established at Fremantle by an Eastern State's company. If that happens it will be just too bad for the Albany mill, as it would not be able to compete with another mill at Fremantle. An Eastern State's mill at Fremantle would in all probability attract expert workers from Albany. I do not know what the member for Albany would say to that, or whether employees would be willing to live in Fremantle rather than Albany, though I think they would. The hon. member might think that is heresy, but we will leave it at that. The mill in Albany has been established for 23 years, and has never yet paid a dividend.

Mr. Watts: That should be a recommendation, in your eyes.

Mr. FOX: I think that is all right. There is nothing wrong with that. I would not mind if the Government itself established a mill.

Mr. Doney: There would be no fear of there being profits then.

Mr. FOX: In pre-war years there was severe competition from the Eastern States, but the demand for blankets manufactured at Albany was always in excess of the supply. In 1938-39 the requirements of blankets for Western Australia was 11,000 pairs of white blankets and 10,000 pairs of grey blankets. The company also manufactured 7,000 rugs, and there was a large number of cheap wool and cotton blankets imported. I believe the demand will be great from now on, and it is the desire of the company to establish a mill at Fremantle capable of turning out 20,000 blankets a

year, as well as rugs, flannels, material for those articles and for overcoats, and other materials.

The State Government guaranteed a bank overdraft of £50,000, but the overdraft of the company has never exceeded £35,000. The estimated cost of establishing the mill at Fremantle is £35,000, with incidentals necessary to starting it off, so it would be necessary to increase the overdraft to £65,000, before work could be started. If that was done the worsted and woollen mills would still operate at Albany. The company fosters the Albany woollen mill as much as possible, but it considers the possibility of extending the woollen mill at Albany is very limited, and that there are no limits to the possibilities of establishing a mill at Fremantle. There is a larger population in the metropolitan area and the freight cost would be saved. Most of the articles manufactured at Fremantle would be sold in Perth, Fremantle, and surrounding towns, and in any other place in Western Australia where they were required. If one cuts out the freight one can see that the mill at Fremantle would be able to compete at an advantage with the mills in the Eastern States. I trust the Government will give further consideration to guaranteeing the required overdraft, or to setting up a mill itself, with assistance from the Commonwealth Government. I know that decentralisation is the policy of the Government, but in a thinly populated country such as ours I do not think the question of decentralisation should come into the matter. It would be a pity if the Albany mill had to close down owing to competition with an Eastern State's mill established at Fremantle. That would be too bad, because I am sure that a mill established at Fremantle by those controlling the Albany mills would be fostered by them to the utmost extent possible.

Now I have a few comments to make in connection with our workers' compensation legislation. Last session an amending Bill was dealt with. Amongst other things it provided that weekly payments should not be subtracted from any lump sum that was payable to a worker. The Act was proclaimed on the 11th January of this year. When dealing with that measure, we omitted to state that its provisions would become operative as from the time of

the passing of the Act. I do not know whether we could have included a clause to that effect; I believe there is a difference of opinion on the matter. As it is, if a man met with an accident before the 11th January his right to a lump sum settlement without deductions by way of weekly payments has no effect, but should the accident have happened after the 11th January that provision would have effect. In my opinion, if a man's right to a lump sum settlement accrued after the 11th January, the insurance company should pay.

The Minister for Lands: There would be no argument about paying if the application came in after the 11th January.

Mr. FOX: But if the accident happened in November, or, say, six months before the 11th January, and his right to a lump sum settlement accrued after that date, I believe the man would be legally entitled to that lump sum settlement.

The Minister for Lands: Has there ever been a refusal to pay that?

Mr. FOX: I understand that legal authorities have been consulted and they assert there are grounds for saying that if the man's right accrued after the 11th January he would be entitled to the lump sum settlement without the weekly payments being deducted. To test the issue would involve a lot of expense seeing that a matter of this description would probably be taken to the High Court for determination, and not many unions or workers would be prepared to take the risk of bringing the issue before the court. I trust the Minister will secure some information regarding the legislation that was before the House of Commons in June last. I understand that some of the provisions embodied in the Bill are in advance of our legislation, and it would certainly be advantageous if we could adopt the best of the provisions in the British legislation.

I understand the Bill provides that an injured worker during the first 26 weeks of his incapacity is to receive 40s. per week and his wife 16s. while for each child there is to be a payment of 7s. 6d. a week. If the worker has two children he gets 71s.; if he has three children, he gets 78s. 6d.; if he has four children, he gets 86s. If at the end of that period he is still incapacitated, he

receives a further personal allowance of 20s. a week. That would mean that the payment for himself, his wife and two children would be £4 11s. a week; if he has three children the payment would be £4 18s. a week, and if he has four children it would be £5 6s. The payments continue at that rate so long as the man is unable to resume his occupation. Members will agree that that provision is far in advance of anything embodied in our own legislation.

Mr. Hoar: Does he get a lump sum settlement?

Mr. FOX: No, it is not a lump sum settlement; the arrangement provided for in the English legislation is much better.

Mr. McDonald: In England they have cut out lump sum settlements.

Mr. FOX: I believe there is a lot of exploitation going on in connection with the fishing industry. In order that the public may receive a better deal I consider that the price of fish should be stabilised. Often it happens that fish is bought in the market today at 6d. a lb. and taken away only to be re-submitted the following day, when it is sold at 1s. a lb. If it is possible to stabilise the prices paid for meat, eggs and other commodities, it should not be difficult to make some similar provision regarding the price of fish. The men engaged in the fishing industry are anxious to distribute their commodity themselves. I was pleased to note in this morning's issue of "The West Australian" that a proposal that two firms in the metropolitan area should have the right to distribute fish supplies, has been rejected.

One reputable fisherman—if there is such; I am referring to the amateur class—told me that one Fremantle firm under the proposed monopoly would pay £11,000 in commission. That is a lot of money for one firm to pay for the handling of such a commodity. Another firm would pay £3,000 in commission. Such large payments would have to be tacked on to the price of fish, so that the people as a whole would have to pay for it in the price charged for the commodity. However, I am pleased that the proposition has not met with approval. I would like to see the fishermen themselves distributing their supplies, and the Government should assist them by establishing markets. I believe that the consumption of fish would increase

by leaps and bounds if prices were more advantageous. It is hard to get requirements supplied in that regard, and in fact about the only time when fish can be procured is on Fridays or Saturdays. If the Government could render some assistance in this matter, I think it would be better for the community generally, and what is rampant today would no longer continue. There are 400 professional fishermen at Fremantle and 150 at Geraldton. They deserve assistance, and I am pleased indeed that no monopoly has been granted to the two firms I have referred to. At present the fishermen are in the process of organising the scheme. They have a live secretary engaged on the task, and I believe if the movement is brought to a successful conclusion the fishermen will be able to retain the profits that now go to others who do very little indeed in connection with the industry.

Next I wish to refer to children who are termed "Rubella victims." Quite a number who, because of measles or German measles contracted by their mothers during the prenatal period, have developed various ailments or disabilities. For instance, one is inability to speak. The State should be active in such a matter to see what can be done. It is very distressing to parents to see children, born in such circumstances, growing up almost perfect in physique and yet unable to speak. During the last fortnight I have seen two cases of this in the Spearwood district. Better looking children than those I saw could not be found anywhere else. For the information of the House I will read an extract from a speech by Mr. W. Black, who is associated with an organisation that deals with this type of child. In the course of his remarks he said—

In 1940 and 1941 there had been a general epidemic of German measles. Women who had contracted this disease during the first two months of pregnancy had had children born to them who were either completely deaf or partially deaf and, in many cases, suffering from congenital heart complications. In some of the Eastern States the children were born with cataracts on their eyes.

Parents of these rubella victims were now able to view the future with considerable optimism, since modern science had proved that children taken early enough, from 2½ to three years, could learn to speak although totally deaf. The method was to teach them to lip-read and feel the vibrations of the teacher's throat as she uttered certain words.

It must be understood that the youngsters were only dumb because they were deaf and not because of any faulty speech mechanism.

I understand that a kindergarten has been opened at Nedlands to deal with these children, but that is a private concern. It is difficult to get suitable teachers, but the Government ought to be able to have some teachers instructed by those conversant with the needs of these children.

The Minister for Lands: The Minister for Education has the matter well in hand. He is getting experts from the Eastern States, both health and teaching.

Mr. FOX: I am glad to hear that. I have been told that there are 16 such children in the Fremantle district alone.

The Minister for Lands: There are 71, all under five years, that we know of in Western Australia.

Mr. FOX: I am pleased that something is being done. I endeavoured to get some information from the Minister for Education before he went away. He said something about opening a school for such children. I do not know whether a school would be the best means of dealing with children of three or three-and-a-half years of age. If a child of that age were taken from its home, it would fret.

The Minister for Lands: Those children are scattered all over the State.

Mr. FOX: It should not be hard to establish a home in a centre so that parents could take the children there in the morning and get them in the afternoon. Parents are naturally much concerned and are prepared to do all they can for children afflicted in this way. A father would give all he had if his child's powers of speech could be restored. If the Government cannot establish schools in various centres and children have to be taken a long way from their homes and provided with accommodation, I hope consideration will be given to the children of poor parents who cannot pay as much as the parents of children more fortunately situated.

Much has been said about the need for removing wartime controls. On nearly every evening over which this debate has extended, some reference has been made to this subject. There is no need for me to reiterate that the electors at the Fremantle by-election showed that they were perfectly satis-

fied with the manner in which the controls are being implemented. If necessary we could agree to controls over food being continued for a much longer period. I do not know what the effect of stopping lend-lease to Britain will be in the matter of food, but Australia should do all it can to help the Old Country. The other night the member for Subiaco looked in this direction, shook her head and implied that we did not think a great deal of Britain.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: That is not true.

Mr. FOX: Then I withdraw the statement. I concluded from the hon. member's demeanour that that is what she intended to convey.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: It is not correct.

Mr. FOX: Recently the British National Farmers' Union met in England and a statement was made—this was before lend-lease was stopped—that if England did not have a bumper harvest next year the people of Britain would have to submit to the lowest rationing in living memory, and that everyone must work in order to produce a bumper crop. At about the same time the American Conference on World Food Supplies found that there was a shortage of 2,500,000 tons of meat, 1,000,000 tons of oil and fat and 1,500,000 tons of sugar. In view of the position in England, we in Australia should be prepared to continue rationing and, if necessary, go a little short in order to help those who have had so much to put up with during the six years of war. The people of England were prepared to send food from their scanty stocks in order to succour the starving people in Europe. We should be prepared to send as much as we can, not only to the people of Britain, but also to the people of European countries, even to the German people, if possible, because they should not be blamed for all the trouble that Hitler and Mussolini have caused in the world.

I wish to make brief reference to a social activity that has been carried on in Fremantle during the last three or four years. I refer to the society formed for the purpose of giving crippled children from the country a holiday of six or eight weeks at Coogee. These children come from all parts of the State and, if necessary, their fares are paid for them. All the work done in their behalf during their stay at the sea-

side is on a voluntary basis. I cannot speak too highly of the large-hearted men and women who give their time—even foregoing their own holidays—and do the most menial work in order to care for these children. I wish to pay a tribute to Mr. Hines, the secretary, who is doing such a fine job. The intention is to build a home at Fremantle and make the institution permanent. The society has £9,000 in hand, but possibly the building will cost a little more than that and the expenses will be fairly high. An appeal might be made throughout the State on behalf of the society, and if members hear of the appeal in their districts, they can support it with confidence that the money will be well spent on behalf of the children. The mothers of the children get a welcome respite while their children are at the seaside and know full well that the children receive just as good treatment there as they do at home.

The member for Mt. Marshall said that as a result of scientific invention he favoured men and women enjoying a shorter working week or no working week at all. The hon. member is on the right track. I consider that an attempt should be made as early as possible to shorten the working week. Before the war, efforts were made throughout the world in this direction. At the Geneva Conference in 1935, a resolution was passed in favour of a working week of 40 hours. This principle has been supported in other countries and has been put into operation by some of them. In Italy in 1935, the hours were reduced from 48 to 40 and the working of overtime was prohibited. That reform was accompanied by a corresponding reduction in pay, but was offset by a system of child endowment. Consequently, in that respect, Mussolini did a fairly good job.

In the United States of America in 1933, the 40-hour week was constitutionally applied to industry generally and, although this was declared by the Supreme Court to be illegal, it continued in operation at least until the war began. In some industries in the United States men work only 32 hours a week, including shipbuilding and repairing and oil refining. Others work 36 hours per week. In the automobile industry the men work only 35 hours per week. Even in Britain, hours of labour have been reduced in several industries from 47 to 41½ per week. In 1933 in Canada hours of work

were reduced to 48 per week by legislative action. In New Zealand the hours have been reduced to 40 per week. So I agree with the member for Mt. Marshall that if the people are to benefit generally by science, that is one way in which they can do so.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [5.31]: I do not propose to detain the House long, but there are a few matters to which I wish to refer and which seem to me to have importance at the present moment. I do not propose to exchange pleasantries with the member for South Fremantle. I have always had a shrewd suspicion that the people expect us in this House to transact their business, and not the business of party politics; and if any party, whether Labour, Liberal or other, is endeavouring to ensure that its policy is in the interests of the people as a whole, then I say, "Good luck to it;" it is rendering a real service to the community.

The first thing I wish to refer to is the changing factors in our Constitution, which I think are of vital importance to the legislative situation in the various States. In 1927, as a result of the Financial Agreement, which was incorporated in the Australian Constitution, the Loan Council was set up consisting of Premiers or Treasurers, for the purpose of reaching agreement on the allocation of Loan moneys. Since that time, as happens in every country—whether its Constitution is written, as in Australia, or unwritten, as in England—there has developed a Constitutional convention, in our case what we now know as the Premiers' Conferences. This appears to me to be a natural development of our Federal system and a convenient one, and I think its importance will grow rather than diminish in the future. But the result is that decisions are arrived at and policies are determined more and more at these conferences without prior reference to the Legislatures of the States, and that is to my mind one of the weaknesses of the new convention or usage which has arisen and is being more widely employed.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Very often the decisions of such conferences have to be ratified by Parliament.

Mr. McDONALD: Frequently they have to be ratified by Parliament, but I venture to suggest that the wisdom of the Premiers' Conferences would be enlarged if there were references—where such references are possible—to the Legislatures of the States before

the conference discussed the matters which were to come before it. I suggest also that, except in matters of urgency, it should be a principle that no decisions made by the Premiers' Conferences should be binding on States—I say except in matters of extreme urgency—unless they are discussed and ratified by the Legislatures of the various States. I have observed that in Great Britain, when a Minister returns from an international conference, he makes a statement to the House of Commons on what has taken place—not a perfunctory statement, but a detailed statement often occupying some hours. I have also observed that the Prime Minister of Great Britain has frequently—perhaps almost always—considered it to be his duty to make his statement first to the Legislature rather than to the Press; and when that statement is made it is not merely for the information of the people's representatives but it is for the purpose of giving those representatives the opportunity to voice their opinions, either affirming or criticising the action taken or proposed to be taken at the conference which the head of the State has attended or is to attend.

As we have a Premier who is now entering on office, I suggest to him that he would gain prestige by recognising the increasing trend towards Premiers' Conferences and the initiating of legislative machinery which is going to keep the democratic side of our institutions to the fore, not only to preserve the proper authority of State Parliaments but also to secure from those State Parliaments assistance in the transaction he may have to undertake before the Premiers' Conference. I notice in the White Paper on unemployment which was recently issued by the Commonwealth Government that with regard to the many problems and decisions involved in the objective of full employment in Australia, it is contemplated that more and more use will be made of Premiers' Conferences and that all decisions of the conferences will be decisions of wide application and of very great importance. In fact, the White Paper in its last two paragraphs, 129 and 130, ends by emphasising the basis of conferences between Federal authorities and State authorities, not only Premiers or Ministers but also highly-placed public servants, and that that basis of conference and collaboration will be essential to the success of any objective of full employment.

I notice that quite recently in the House of Commons, Mr. Morrison—I think it was—when Minister in the Churchill Government, laid on the Table of the House of Commons a statement of the Government's proposals for insurance against accident. The Government's intention was to take that insurance away from the present workers' compensation system, establish a central fund to which all employers would contribute and thereby create an accident fund which would not only more fully support those who were the victims of accident, but would give them, if necessary, an annuity for the rest of their lives to make up for the disability which they had suffered. Mr. Morrison moved that the paper lie on the Table of the House for the information of the Legislature, the House of Commons, for the purpose of instituting a debate by members in advance of the acceptance of the proposals, or the final confirmation of the proposals, by the Government and the incorporation of the proposals in the form of legislation. That seems to me to be a most desirable procedure, in which the Government would be strengthened by the variety of views expressed to the Chamber and by criticism that might come forward in relation to a proposal.

In view of the trend—and, I think, the unavoidable trend—of the times, involving increased co-operation between the Commonwealth and the States, we must institute machinery by which the State Legislature can be informed and play its part in the decisions which are to be arrived at and which will widely affect the economic and social conditions of Western Australia. I am going to suggest a number of ways in which I think this principle might be followed. There could be a statement by the responsible Minister or the Premier in writing read to the House setting out the proposed objectives in any particular matter, and a motion to lay it on the Table of the House, with a constructive debate to follow, the terms of which would assist the Minister and the Government when they went before any council of Commonwealth Ministers and State Premiers or Ministers. If and when decisions were arrived at on matters of importance at any such conference, a further statement could be made and laid on the Table and an opportunity given to the House to discuss it.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: Even the Premiers sometimes do not know what they are going to discuss when they get there. Things are brought on so late.

Mr. McDONALD: I think the comment of the member for Geraldton only indicates that, unless the matter is one of urgency, the Commonwealth must provide an agenda beforehand. It would be in the highest degree unsatisfactory and to the disservice of the States and the whole nation if Premiers were called together and obliged to give decisions on major matters of policy without an adequate opportunity to consult colleagues in their Cabinets or the Parliaments they lead. It all shows that there are major weaknesses which are not going to be of assistance in good government.

I pass now to reference to a few matters which appear to me to demand the attention of the Government and Parliament. There are many of them but I shall refer to a few only. The first is: What are we going to do about uniform taxation? It automatically expires on the 30th June, 1947. It is called uniform taxation, but it is Commonwealth income tax monopoly. It will automatically expire unless, by an amendment of the Constitution on Referendum or an Act of reference from the States, the power or the monopoly of collecting income tax is given permanently or for an extended term to the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth has made no bones about its determination to secure the monopoly apparently permanently.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: That was not given by reference or any other Act of the States.

Mr. McDONALD: No, it was given by what Dr. Evatt called the exercise of the economic power over the States. In other words, they said at the time by implication, "We come first in income taxation and we will collar the lot unless you take the hand-out we are prepared to give you." We took the hand-out not because we succumbed to pressure—although perhaps the Government did, because it appealed against the decision and thought it was a wrong principle, and with some justification—but because it was a time of war and crisis. I am one of those who at the time of the debate were prepared to agree to the Commonwealth terms and give it a monopoly of tax collection for the period of the war and 12 months afterwards; but I will confess that I did so perhaps

from that trusting nature which is unfortunately mine and in the full expectation that what the Commonwealth promised—namely, that the taxing power would be restored to us after the war—would be honoured.

But let us be fair to the Commonwealth, and realise that the war went on for a long time and that the Commonwealth has very big financial obligations, not only on account of the debt incurred through the war, but on account of its duty in the rehabilitation of returned soldiers and its duty to the dependants of the fallen. At the same time, I would be very reluctant to see the Commonwealth permanently, or for any material term, continue in sole control of the collection of income tax from this State. Of what can happen, we have an example, already referred to by the Premier in his Press statement today: the refusal of the Commonwealth Government to grant any financial aid to education. I think that if the revenues from income tax had been in the charge of this Government and this Parliament, there would have been some additional aid to education. I do not think the problem is insoluble; and, while not committing myself to it, I suggest that we might consider that for an extended term of two or three years at all events the revenue collected from income tax in Australia might be a matter under the joint control of the Commonwealth and the States.

For example, the States would say, "We want to collect so much by way of income tax." The Commonwealth would say, "We want to collect so much by way of income tax; and the taxation imposed would be such as would raise the aggregate amount which, on receipt, could then be apportioned between the Commonwealth and the States in accordance with the broad budget presented. That would be very much on the same lines as those on which the Loan Council now operates. The States say, "We want so many millions in loans." The Commonwealth says, "We want so many." A loan is raised for the aggregate, and then the proceeds are apportioned in accordance with the desires of the States and the Commonwealth so far as they can be realised.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: But the collection of money by way of loans is not as complicated as it is in connection with income tax, because you would have six authorities.

Mr. McDONALD: I agree and can foresee the difficulties; but I am suggesting the possibility of a formula under which the States would still be allowed some control and some discretion as to the amount of collections from income tax, the reason being, as I mentioned, that I am reluctant to see this State—which has problems in many ways different from those of the settled and highly populated States—without any control of income tax which may be raised from its own people.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: It must be uniform before it can be done.

Mr. McDONALD: I realise that. I have gone rather fully into the question of uniform income taxation and the provisions of the Constitution which say that there shall be no discrimination between States. But even so, there is, to my mind, quite a possibility of reaching some agreement that would allow a certain amount of elasticity in the collection of tax. For example, there are constitutional difficulties in granting a remission of tax on incomes in the North-West of this State. There are many members here, myself included, who believe that there should be a complete remission of income tax in the North-West for a period of years. But even if difficulties do exist I think it is not beyond the ingenuity and the patience of Parliaments and of the Premiers' Conference to devise a method by which they can be overcome. I want to return to that later.

Last year I said I hoped that factory installations that had been built up in this State with the people's money for war purposes would not be abandoned. They can be used either for munitions production in the post-war period, because we must always produce munitions, or converted to the production of civilian goods. It has always seemed to me that in a State like Western Australia, which has so few secondary industries compared with the other States, and which has done so badly with regard to war industries compared with the other States, it would be a great injustice if the few factories established here during the war, with the people's money, were to be closed. I know that the practical difficulties are very great, but I suggest that if the Commonwealth Government had a real appreciation of the necessity for a balanced

industrial economy it would use every power it had to ensure that factory installations, built in the central States, were transferred to States like Western Australia. In selling machinery, for example, or other equipment in the Eastern States it is not impossible to make a stipulation that it shall be used for production in a State such as this. I am not going to labour this point, but I am glad to see that the Premier is prepared to cross swords even with some of the most redoubtable Commonwealth Ministers, and I suggest he might cross a sword or two on the matter of getting the very best he can for this State as a result of the money that has been spent on factory installations during the war. Then we want to press for Commonwealth aid for education. I need say no more about that than merely make the statement.

In regard to housing, I am a great believer in trusting the people to do things of community concern. The necessity for keeping housing in a narrow channel and in the hands of Commonwealth or State servants, however good they may be, should be overcome. I would like to see the Government mobilise every agency possible in this State to meet the housing difficulty. It could call into association, under Government chairmanship, representatives of the building trades, the trades that supply building materials, the local governing authorities, architects and all others who are concerned in the matter of building, especially the building of houses. I am not going to repeat or elaborate what I said the other night that the subject of housing is explosive. One feels rather happy to be sitting on the Opposition side, knowing that one has no responsibilities worth talking of for what might happen if many tens of thousands of soldiers return to this State to find that they and their families have no shelter to which to go. I think, in broad terms and without going into detail, we would be wise to mobilise every agency of goodwill and qualification in this State, and get their representatives together to see that the greatest energy is directed to meeting what is really a crisis of some magnitude.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: We are in this happy position that I believe the most economic organisation in Australia is our own Workers' Homes Board.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. McDONALD: I grant full merit to the Workers' Homes Board, but it has not produced the houses; no doubt through no fault on its part, but that is what I am concerned with.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Hear, hear!

Mr. McDONALD: I do not care whether all the bouquets in the world are passed to the Workers' Homes Board, the point is that the houses are not here and they must be obtained quickly.

I pass now to the Perth Hospital. The citizens of Perth have walked up and down the streets and seen that monument on the sky-line for more than five years. I know that there have been difficulties in the way of its completion, but I also know that in Melbourne it has been possible to build, complete and put into use a general hospital in wartime. In Adelaide a large building has been erected and equipped and is about to be used for the surgical work of the Adelaide Public Hospital. I am not going to enlarge on the question of the Perth Hospital, but I had occasion to go there recently, and it is one of the most gloomy institutions through which a person could walk.

Mr. Thorn: What a pity the new hospital has been put where it is with such a horrible outlook.

Mr. McDONALD: The old hospital has played its part, and it is now completely out of date. Everything is gloomy and depressing both for the patients and the staff, doctors and nurses, who are doing a wonderful work. The ex-Minister for Health knows that all I have said is true. I could give details from my own knowledge of the difficulties encountered in coping with the obligations laid on the hospital, but all I want to say is this: Are we doing everything in our power to get that hospital finished? Can we not occupy it floor by floor? Even that would make an immense difference to the sick people of this community, and it would be an encouragement to the staff of the hospital.

In spite of the manpower difficulties I believe, so far as the actual work is concerned, that if the Minister made an appeal to the tradesmen of this city, that is the plumbers, carpenters, plasterers and others who could give technical assistance, they

would respond and work at night to complete the hospital for the use of themselves and their families. I am not prepared to believe that manpower difficulties could not be overcome. The hospital cannot be allowed to remain much longer simply as a monument. If the Commonwealth authorities will not give permits for material or manpower, and so put the health of the community in a low priority, then the Government will have the complete support of this House and of the people of the State, no matter how strong may be the language it uses in order to bring about better conditions.

The wartime arrangements for the marketing of many of our primary commodities are now ending, and in particular I refer to wheat and wool. It is true that we have long-term contracts for the sale of some of our products, such as dairy products, running till 1948, but I would like the Minister for Lands to initiate a debate in this House—in the way I have suggested—as to what our policy is regarding wool and wheat. It is true that the Commonwealth Government has, under wartime conditions and the exercise of the Defence power, assumed the responsibility for and control of marketing of our major primary export products, and many other primary products, but that power will very shortly cease. Are we agreed—I hope we are—that we need to support the price structure of these major export industries? If so, how are we to do it? Is Section 92 of the Constitution Act to be amended, to enable Commonwealth-wide marketing schemes to be set up? I hope it will be so amended and I think it is essential, but here is a matter in which the existing arrangements under the Defence power of the Commonwealth are about to conclude, and it is a matter vital to a great many people in this State and in fact, to the whole economy of the State. May I suggest that it is a matter well worthy of a statement by the Government, as to its views, and an expression of views by members of this House as to how best we can conserve the interests of what is important to the State's progress.

I am glad to see that a Minister of Transport has been appointed, but what is our outlook for transport? Are we to have the restrictions on road transport for all time, in favour of the conservation of the money

we have invested in the railways, in view of the developments that have taken place in transport of all kinds? Or have we to review the role of our railways and roads, and the situation of air transport? I think we have, and I am sure every member will agree that we must review these matters. Cannot this policy be made a matter for discussion? But not on the Address-in-reply, because quite candidly we get nowhere! I have just taken the trouble to read all the speeches on the Address-in-reply up to date, and have seen many useful suggestions, but they are not crystallised into any decision or action, and we need something specific in the way of the policy we mean to follow, and the objectives we hope to obtain.

I commend the member for South Fremantle—in spite of his elementary political views—for his reference to the position of the British people, as regards food supplies. I had put that down for reference, myself. A few months ago in South Australia a petition, signed by some thousands of people, asked for some machinery to make contributions of food to the British people. There are difficulties, even if people were able or willing to surrender coupons to a substantial extent. I commend the view expressed by the member for South Fremantle and the member for Subiaco, that if we can devise means to come to the aid of Britain and any other country—Britain today, because she is most in need—with extra supplies, particularly of food, it would be a magnificent gesture on the part of Australia, and if the Government would take the initiative and press for this, from this State, it would be doing something which would receive the overwhelming commendation of the people of Western Australia.

The North-West has come into the news a great deal more today than in the past, and nobody can read the report on the conference at Whim Creek without a feeling of grave disquiet, and a feeling—with all deference to our North-West members—that something might have been done before this to meet the situation which has arisen. I know we have a Governmental committee, on which pastoralists are represented, and which is going into the matter, and that is all to the good. I have noted the proposal for a committee to examine the position of the whole north of Australia, and that is all

to the good, but I would like to see the Government once again meet a situation of urgency by tabling a statement of policy, for the purpose of having it debated in this House, particularly by the members representing the northern areas.

I did not like to see discussed, at Whim Creek, the secession of a rich and important part of our State from the southern areas of the State, but if we do not give the people of the North and North-West the justice of a discussion in this House, on their problems alone, I think they may have a good deal more ground for the growth of the secession movement than they have today. Let us have more about the North-West. Personally, I think we might well regard the North and the North-West as fit subjects for a measure of devolution of government, and that in both the North and the North-West we might have regional councils, representative of pastoral, business, trade union and other interests, whose function it would be to promote the social and economic conditions of those areas through various means such as income tax remissions, the provision of various amenities, improved transport facilities and other appropriate measures. The long hand of government tends to become weaker where it stretches over long distances such as from Canberra to Perth and from Perth to Wyndham. In those circumstances, some degree of local government and local advice will be valuable.

The Minister for Works: We might even have a seventh State!

Mr. McDONALD: It would be too much to ask the people of the North to bear the cost of another House of Parliament, particularly as the member for Guildford-Midland thinks Western Australia as a whole cannot afford to support one particular branch of the existing Legislature.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Hear, hear!

Mr. McDONALD: The Agent-General for Western Australia is a man for whom I have great regard and I know that he and his wife, during the war period, have done much in their solicitude for prisoners-of-war and other of our men oversea. I do not wish to say anything derogatory about him but, so far as I know, no report has been presented by the Agent-General to this Parliament. I do not know what he

does—beyond his social activities. Mr. Troy is a man of great ability and is very conscientious.

The Minister for Lands: He could not do very much beyond what you suggest during the war period.

Mr. McDONALD: Perhaps not during those years, but it is different now.

The Minister for Lands: That is so.

Mr. McDONALD: Now is the time when all countries, large and small, are reaching out to secure new grips upon the trade that is offering. What are we doing? No word has come to us as to the views of our London Agency on this matter. No report from the Agent General has been tabled in the House for years. I suggest that we either abolish the London Agency or make it more effective.

Mr. J. Hegney: No report from the Agent-General has been tabled in Parliament during the 15 years I have been a member.

Mr. McDONALD: I do not remember it ever being done.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Years ago we were accustomed to receive very good reports.

The Minister for Lands: That must have been over 20 years ago; I have never heard of them.

Mr. McDONALD: At any rate, I suggest that the London Agency should be abolished, or else made a very effective instrumentality for Western Australia.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McDONALD: Either one or the other course should be adopted. I offer this suggestion without reflecting in any way upon Mr. Troy, for I feel the present position is highly unsatisfactory and should be terminated or altered.

Mr. Smith: Agents-General did very good work for Western Australia in the old days.

Mr. McDONALD: Yes, perhaps that is so—in the old days.

Mr. Smith: Sir Hal Colebatch did a lot for Western Australia while he was Agent-General in London.

Mr. McDONALD: He was very active, no doubt, and I do not say that he did not do a great deal. On the other hand, on the evidence before us, we do not know anything about what may be done. I know that the present Agent-General was active, to some

extent, in connection with the Fremantle power-house negotiations, but that alone would not justify the continuance of the London Agency.

Hon. H. Millington: There is a very big deal going on now.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. McDONALD: The hon. member is, of course, referring to the power-house business; but Mr. Taylor has gone Home, at the expense of the State, to deal with that matter, and there is a limit to the number of our advisers. If Mr. Taylor has had to go to England, it looks as though the Agent-General, who is not a technical man, will not have much to do with it.

The Minister for Works: He will have a lot to do with the financial side of the business.

Mr. McDONALD: Is that quite correct?

The Minister for Works: Yes.

Mr. McDONALD: Would not all the details have been worked out before Mr. Taylor left here, and additional expenditure be subject to reference back to the Treasurer of this State? How much discretion would be left to the Agent-General, who is a non-technical man, seeing that an expert officer has been sent to England to conduct negotiations?

The Minister for Works: A technical man is not necessarily an able adviser on financial questions.

Mr. McDONALD: If I were the Treasurer I would certainly require such matters to be referred back to me, seeing that they run into millions.

The Minister for Works: I would not blame you.

Mr. McDONALD: I hope that land settlement proposals will be placed before Parliament shortly. I have just received a letter from a Western Australian who is stationed in the Islands, and, under date the 16th August, he says—

In this unit and probably most units of the A.I.F. there is an attempt being made to guide and help soldiers in selecting what occupation they are to take up on demobilisation. This has taken the form of lectures on such subjects as farming, motor mechanics, bookkeeping, etc., and also an attempt to advise the individual on the suitability of the occupation which he is thinking of taking up.

To help and guide us in the giving of advice, a letter was sent to the Lands Department of Western Australia for particulars

of the War Service Land Settlement Scheme. A reply was received consisting of a circular letter with several enclosures. I quote the opening paragraph of the circular—

In reply to your letter of the 16th July, 1945, I have to advise that, pending the enactment of legislation to implement the agreement reached at the Premiers' Conference in October, 1944 (the main provisions of which are outlined in the enclosed summary), no definite information can be given as to the extent to which ex-service personnel may be assisted to obtain properties under the War Service Land Settlement Scheme.

My correspondent goes on to say—

How on earth can we give advice if the Government hasn't even passed the necessary legislation to put the scheme into operation?

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. McDONALD: I am sure the Minister for Lands will exert every endeavour to introduce the necessary legislation regarding soldier settlement. By so doing he will help to allay the anxiety of discharged men who will now, we understand, be returning to civil life at the rate of 3,000 or 4,000 a day.

I wish to refer to the Government's water supply programme. It has been suggested, and I think with some justification, that the history of this State will be written in terms of water, and I personally am an advocate of works that will mean a more adequate provision of the factor that is so essential to the success of our primary industries and the amenities of our rural towns. I want to tell the Minister for Works that the people are interested to know in more detail what the Government's proposals are.

For example, I can imagine that some of the water supply projects are works of urgency and require to be put in hand at an early date. Some of them may well be planned beforehand in accordance with the Commonwealth Government's White Paper on full employment as a means by which employment may be assured if we are threatened at any time with a recession in the employment figures. In addition, it is a matter of very great importance to know what the costs are going to be to the people in rural areas who will be served by the supplies and how much is going to fall upon the general taxpayer. On this matter of State-wide importance and in relation to a programme which will extend over a number of years, I earnestly suggest to the Minister that he tables, in the way I have

suggested in regard to other matters, some details of his policy to enable members to discuss the position and offer such suggestions as their experience and study may enable them to bring forward.

During the suspension for tea, I read in the Press of this evening a statement bearing on the matter raised by me and also by the member for Subiaco and the member for South Fremantle in relation to supplies of food for Britain. Members will have seen the statement by the Leader of the British Food Mission, Mr. W. Bankes Amery, under the caption "British Mothers Plead for Food." Mr. Amery, in the course of a statement made in Adelaide today, said—

Australian exports of carcase meat to Britain were now only a third of the total at the outbreak of war. Butter exports were also down a third and cheese to a sixth.

Existence of 47,000,000 people in Britain depended on the possibility of these figures being raised somewhat nearer the pre-war levels.

I make that quotation because it underlines the state of emergency that faces the people of Britain and the opportunity and responsibility for us in Australia to do what we can to meet the crisis with which the Old Country is now confronted.

MR. WITHERS (Bunbury) [7.36]: It is rather late in the debate to speak, but I have special reasons on this occasion for inflicting myself upon the House. During the years I have been a member, I have expressed my opinion of the Address-in-reply debate, but I am speaking tonight in anticipation of the possibility of this being my swan song. In saying this, I do so without any disrespect for State politics.

Mr. Doney: You could not after having been here about 25 years.

Mr. WITHERS: Before the last election, I made up my mind that I would not continue as a member of the State Parliament, and having nominated in the selection ballot for the Senate, I shall not, if successful, be here next year. Of course, if I am not successful, I might have to inflict myself upon members once more.

The Minister for Lands: I hope you are successful.

Mr. WITHERS: I thank the Minister. Belated though it may be, I wish to join in the congratulations to members who have been elevated to higher positions—the Pre-

mier, the Deputy Premier and the new Minister for Mines. I regret the cause that impelled the member for Geraldton to relinquish the arduous duties of Premier. I have been associated with the hon. member for over 43 years. In our younger days we worked together, and we have been closely associated in the Labour movement and in politics during the whole of that time. In the circumstances, however, it was probably wise of the hon. member to relinquish his position. We all know and appreciate what Ministers have to contend with. Compared with them, a lay member possibly has an easy time, but we can understand the burden falling on those who hold ministerial positions.

Most subjects have been dealt with during the debate. I appreciate the action taken by the Government towards establishing a power scheme for the South-West after a period extending back to 1926 when we passed the South-West Electric Power Act. The matter has been, if I may say so, a burning question in the South-West during all those years, and we have always looked upon it as the main essential to the progress of that district. Of course, as was mentioned by the member for West Perth, water conservation is also a very serious problem and one that should receive serious consideration at the hands of the Government. The South-West Power Scheme, however, is something we must have to ensure the future development of that part of the State. When I first entered Parliament, I had a note of parochialism; and possibly, before I finish tonight, I shall be told I still have it. Nevertheless, I have widened my vision. I am looking not only at Bunbury but at the whole South-West portion of the State, including Albany.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. WITHERS: I will be dealing with that point later on, perhaps parochially; but I realise, and I think the Government and every member in this Chamber also realise, what lies before us in the way of possibilities in that part of the State. We have great opportunities there. I want to see the South-West Power Scheme established, because it will assist us to do what is essential for the manufacture of the products of the district. Side by side with our primary production we must have a levelling-up of our secondary industries, whether we

decide to embark upon heavy industry or not. We have had proof during the past few years of the desirability of processing the products of the district. Therefore, I am looking forward to the establishment of secondary industries such as we have at Donnybrook, Mt. Barker and other districts in connection with the processing of our fruits. We have a great future before us in that respect. We must encourage people to settle in the district by letting them understand that they will be given facilities and the opportunity to engage in the production of fruits and foods that can be processed.

Some 20 years ago I passed through Shepparton in Victoria. It was then a comparatively small place. Imagine my amazement when I passed through it less than 12 months ago and observed the wonderful development that had taken place! There is no reason why we should not have a Shepparton in the southern part of our State. The opportunities are there and we are nearer the markets for our processed foods than is Shepparton. We should concentrate on the production and processing of food supplies which are required in the vicinity immediately to the north of Australia. It is useless to talk about growing tropical fruits for export to Borneo. The only market we can expect for the bananas grown in Carnarvon is the State market. It is no use sending bananas to countries where they grow wild. Therefore, we must concentrate on the production of commodities that will be in demand, when peace is thoroughly established, in the islands to the north of Australia.

The possibilities of the South-West do not stop at the processing of milk. I know of an area of land running from Spearwood practically to the Leeuwin—what we call our coastal lands. These lands have not been developed to any great extent. In 1925 I induced the then Minister for Lands (the late Mr. Angwin) to pay a special visit to my district with the object of endeavouring to get the Government to do something to assist in the settlement of the land between Mandurah and Australind, the area mentioned by the member for Forrest the other evening. It has been proved what can be done at Spearwood. Right throughout that district we have wonderfully suitable soil for the growing of

figs and grapes, as well as stone fruits such as peaches and apricots.

Mr. Abbott: What about citrus fruits?

Mr. WITHERS: Not so much, but possibly lemons. In reply to the hon. member's interjection, I say that we are rather chary of growing citrus fruits in the South, as these are the host during the winter of the fruit-fly. Navel oranges are today not grown in the South, although Valencia oranges are. It has been found that the navel orange acts as a host for the fruit-fly and we do not want to encourage that pest. In fact, stone fruits are also a menace because they too harbour the fruit fly. We may be able to overcome that difficulty, because the fly occurs only in one season of the year. A person can travel through the old settled areas to the other side of the Yallingup Caves and to Pinjarra and Mandurah and see old flourishing fig trees that were planted by the early settlers. Mulberries and almonds also flourish in that limestone country, which is suitable for that class of fruit. If we could only get the right type of person to engage in the production of these fruits we should not be placing all our eggs in one basket, or all our milk in one can.

I wish to state in regard to that production that I have heard it said by some of our prominent Parliamentary leaders that some time after the war there will be little, if any, of our production required in the Old Country, because England during the war period has expanded her rural industries to such a great extent. While this debate has been in progress I have taken out some figures in that connection. Before I deal with them, I would like to say that, so far as concerns our dairy production, we have no fear. We know that our dairy production is down this year. There is a definite reason for the decline, and that is shortage of manpower. I have heard dairy farmers say they are going out of the business. They say so merely because it is not suiting them for the time being, and they are hoping to secure something a little more acceptable to them. But I want to say that there is no limit to the processing of milk today. We have been processing it for butter and cheese, as well as for condensed milk. Now we are processing it for dried milk. Dried milk has proved itself to be a very valuable food; and there

will be a wonderful opening for trade in it with India, as was pointed out by the delegates we had from India. Therefore, we need not stop processing milk because we cannot sell all our butter and all our cheese, although even they will be in demand.

If we are going in for the processing of our milk, it should be realised that there is little that cannot be made out of it. Even penicillin is being produced from it, and quite a number of other drugs. We will be building houses with it next, and that will overcome the housing problem! I want to impress on the House and on those in authority that they need not worry about what England is producing today to the detriment of Australian production in the future. Of course, we have a very keen competitor with our milk products; I refer to margarine. A year or two ago, the then Minister for Lands introduced a Bill to protect the butter industry against the competition of margarine. Margarine today is a very popular food in England and we must produce butter—whether we send it Home dried or in any other form—at a reasonable price and of good quality to enable it to compete with margarine. That could be done by a continuance of assistance by way of subsidy to the farmer in case he is not otherwise able to make a success of the business with the price he obtains for his product. When it is all boiled down, it is the responsibility of the nation to see that our surplus production is disposed of overseas at a profit. If the individual cannot sell his product at a profit, the nation should see that he does not suffer a loss.

In connection with the position in England, I propose to give the House a few figures. After the last war and up to 1937, England had spent £1,300,000,000 in keeping alive her unemployed. On her hands at that time, the country had 1,500,000 unemployed. An unemployed community cannot consume the amount of foodstuffs it could consume if it were in employment. That is to say, people could do so but have not the wherewithal. In 1936, it was estimated that nearly 2,000,000 houses would be required by 1951 to house the ordinary population of England without any replacements; and 3,000,000 houses had been built since the last war. I mention that to indicate the area of land that has been taken up by the erection of houses in England. If the population

of that country is going to be housed to the fullest extent, a few more thousand acres of land that might be thought to be arable will have to be utilised.

The member for West Perth mentioned something about the English home-killed animals. In 1937, they numbered 20,204,000 which provided 27,254,000 cwt. of meat. As another 30,000,000 cwt. is annually required, it is contended that another 41,000,000 acres of pasture and rough grazing land must be made available. If the increased number of cattle supplied the 10,000,000 cwt. of butter and 3,000,000 cwt. of cheese now imported, what about the egg supply? At the period to which I have referred, there were 78,000,000 fowls in England, and 56,000,000 more were required to keep up the egg supply. The land they would take up would not allow for the growing of the foodstuffs they consumed. Such foodstuffs are imported principally from America. Another 187,000 acres would be required for poultry farms and hen runs. It is estimated that England was short of 17,000,000 acres of land for the 1937 human and animal population and of another 10,000,000 acres to provide fodder for the increased livestock. In addition, 97,000 acres were required for market gardens. Perhaps another 1,000,000 acres would be required to offset canned food.

The grand total of missing land in England—these figures are interesting, although they may be a little tedious—is 69,000,000 acres, and the area of the United Kingdom is only 60,153,000 acres, of which 9,000,000 acres are agriculturally unproductive; they are not fit for agriculture. On the 51,000,000 acres left, only 38 to 40 per cent. of what is consumed is capable of being produced. All that land is required for the purposes I have mentioned. England has a population of 47,000,000, but the productive capacity of the country is sufficient to provide for only 22,000,000. Half the population could be removed from England and the productive capacity of the land would be barely sufficient to feed those that were left. At the particular period of which I am speaking, there was talk of widening all the highways, thus taking up thousands more acres of the land. They were speaking of building houses at the watering places and in the urban areas for the accommodation of the people removed from the slum quarters. This

would take up thousands more acres of land. The people of this State must realise that England has not the productive capacity to feed half the people she has today, and we must go on doing the job we have before us. We are handicapped, of course, by distance from England and by the fact that Great Britain has £300,000,000 invested in Argentina, a large sum compared with what is invested in Australia.

Mr. Doney: Where did you get the figures showing that that amount is invested in Argentina today?

Mr. WITHERS: I am giving the statistics for 1937.

Mr. Doney: Britain's interests in Argentina have largely been sold since then.

Mr. WITHERS: Possibly.

Mr. J. Hegney: The member for Williams-Narrogin has no right to say that.

Mr. WITHERS: That was the position at that time and naturally Britain must back up the country where its interests are.

Mr. Mann: Go on, make your point!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bunbury will proceed.

Mr. WITHERS: Argentina is so much closer to the market than is Australia. Another thing about Argentina is that that country is not worrying so much about milk products as we have been doing in Australia. They have been going in for the dual purpose beast, and only recently I read that they have a large animal which they milk in the morning. They run the calf with it all day and milk the cow again next morning, and so on. Thus the calf has the benefit of half the cow's production of milk, and when it is 12 months old it is sold as baby beef on the British market at a high value. One wonders whether we could not consider doing something along those lines with our cattle in the southern portion of Western Australia. These things are taking place and we can learn by reading of what other people are doing for the benefit of their country.

We should not stay put on what we term essential production. We are, I hope, a growing nation and because of that we have to do things that other people have done to command the markets of the world. I could tell members about the acreage under wheat, which runs into millions. England produces millions of bushels of wheat, al-

though the people there do not deal in bushels, but in quarters and hundred-weights, but if four times the area was sown to wheat there would still be only 8,000,000 acres so used. In 1937, 2,000,000 acres were put under wheat; perhaps there is more today, but England was under-produced then to the extent of 114,000,000 bushels for home consumption, and that is leaving out all the other necessities of life that have to be imported into England. Australia has that one future prospect, regardless of the fact that England has been forced into this production during the war period. What the Leader of the Liberal Party has just said is quite true. England has made great sacrifices in the last six years in connection with its food consumption, and we have to see if we can help. We must not slacken our efforts. Immediately we get an opportunity we want to do everything possible in the way of producing the foods that I have mentioned for the people overseas, and we are able to do it.

The question of housing has been dealt with at great length. I have wondered, listening here, why that is so. There must be some reason why this move has been made at this period, and why almost all the responsibility has been thrown on the Government of the day for the lack of housing. No blame was thrown on the Government of the day when we had our tin-can alley at Canning Bridge and when the people did not know what it meant to have a roof over their heads. That is when we should have been talking about housing! But no, the people were out of work and had no homes. Today we say they must have homes. They must have both.

Mr. J. Hegney: They had no money then.

Mr. Mann: Another Government was in power at that time.

Mr. WITHERS: As the member for South Fremantle pointed out, we were wanting houses for the working-class people as far back as 1912 when the first workers' homes were built. We have been aware of the need all through the piece, and in 1937 we brought down a Bill, which passed this Chamber, for the purpose of doing what we did two years ago, namely, allowing the Government to build houses for letting. The Bill at that time was thrown out by another place by 13 votes to ten. What did

the Premier say at that time? He said the Workers' Homes Board had a waiting list that would take three or four years to overtake, for houses costing from £700 to £900. He wanted the Government to be allowed to enter into competition, if that term can be used, by building houses for letting purposes, so as to relieve the congestion. Another place said, "No, you cannot do that." The inference was that it would be interfering with private enterprise. Now, private enterprise has not stepped into the breach to help these people, so why blame the Government of the day for not having the houses when we were short in 1937?

We have always been short of houses. I know of a house built in Mt. Lawley by a contractor. A man who wanted to buy it had half the purchase price, and he said, "I will get the other half from the Workers' Homes Board." When the board's inspector looked over the building, he would not grant the money because it was such a shoddy building. It was a wood and stone building with a tiled roof, and was being sold for £1,400. The Workers' Homes Board adopted the attitude that if we are to have houses, we must have proper houses. Before leaving Bunbury on Monday night, I discussed this question, and a man there said that if a piece of 3in. x 2in. timber had a break in the centre, any contractor would simply nail a piece of board alongside it, and up it would go just the same, and the plaster would cover it so that no-one would know. That is what happens with private enterprise. Government controls have their virtues, at any rate.

Mr. Mann: That is too far-fetched. You get it both ways, by—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. WITHERS: During the period when it was not payable to build houses, private enterprise did nothing. That was when the Government should have had an opportunity to step in. Immediately the Government had the opportunity, the then Premier brought down a Bill which was passed in this House. It got the blessing of the then Leader of the Opposition, Hon. C. G. Latham, and went through Committee without comment, but when it got to the Upper House it was defeated, and that was the end of the scheme to make available

the required housing at that time, even though it needed three or four years for the Workers' Homes Board to catch up on its applications. The question of housing is not a new one. The food controller of the last war, John R. Clynes, when he was in his 'teens—that would be in the eighties—went to a debate, in Greenacres, England, on the housing problem. I was a pretty young boy then.

The Minister for Lands: Were you pretty?

Mr. WITHERS: Well, a very young boy. Pretty boys grow ugly, anyway.

The Minister for Lands: You must have been handsome.

Mr. WITHERS: For two hours, 13 people debated the housing problems of England at that time. It was said that when they finished there was not a landlord, politician or clergyman left outside the gates of Hell. When Clynes came to speak, he said, "I have listened for two hours to these addresses on housing. I have one minute in which to make my speech. I have not heard anything tonight that was not known before." That is applicable to the whole of the remarks made here on the subject. We have not heard anything that we have not heard before. Clynes went on to say, "Will we have any better houses when we go home, after all this talk, than before?" They did not, because it was only a few years afterwards when Lloyd George came along, in the early part of this century, and had the same thing to say about the housing problem. It is not new. It seems that this Address has been marked with a catch-cry to place the Government in an invidious position.

Mr. Mann: What rot!

Mr. WITHERS: Then why were not members opposite as anxious to have houses a year ago?

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: We were.

Mr. Mann: We have not been in power for years.

Mr. WITHERS: They did not do very much about it. I am definitely sympathetic regarding the housing question, but I do not think we have gone fully into the pros and cons of the houses that are required.

The Minister for Works: You mean the "mod cons."

Mr. WITHERS: I know there are numbers of people in this city, from Bunbury and other places, who have left their houses behind. People have crowded into the cities during the war period. I know of hundreds of people who left the goldfields, in days gone by, and brought their houses with them, but that was 30 years ago. I know that houses were brought from Cue, on the Murchison, right down to Boyup Brook, so it is not a joke to say that people have come away from various places and left their houses behind them.

The Minister for Works: It is a bit of a joke.

Mr. WITHERS: A number of the men who are leaving the Army will, I hope, be coming back to their own homes. There are a number of boys—I have two in the Army—who will come back to their own homes.

Mr. Willmott: Many of the boys will be coming back to get married.

Mr. WITHERS: How many of these people will require houses? The debate last night in connection with the manpower position was not a shot in the dark. On reading this morning's issue of "The West Australian" I almost thought there was some spirit at work somewhere, that the Premier—when making a statement at Kalgoorlie yesterday—was overheard by someone in Perth, who came along and "blew the gaff," as it were. Had they waited until this morning's paper there could not have been an amendment of any consequence last night.

Mr. Doney: We certainly had no foreknowledge of that.

Mr. WITHERS: It looked as though there was some spirit at work to inspire it. I know the amendment of the member for Beverley was inspired, because each one that supported him had paragraphs and clippings from the Press, ready to stand up and speak when he sat down, but it was handed over to this side of the House and the Acting Premier was expected to reply immediately. When the war is supposed to be finished, why all this about houses? We read in the paper only the other day that 10,000 volunteers are required to go into Japan and other places after the war, and in this morning's paper we read that volunteers are to go into Rabaul and Borneo. We must have armies of occupation.

Mr. Doney: How many soldiers is it suggested we will want altogether, for that purpose?

Mr. WITHERS: We want sufficient to defend what we have won. Are we to tell the authorities that they must not take carpenters or farm labourers? God help the farm labourer when he returns, though the carpenter will get employment. I want the primary producers of this country to stand up to their job. There will be enough work in this country for a number of our returned men if every one that went away from a job gets it back on his return, providing he is fit. We must take into consideration the number who will not be fit.

The Minister for Works: You have the member for Beverley scratching his head now.

Mr. WITHERS: I do not want to go into individual questions, but in more than one case I have had an appeal from a farmer who said, "Get my boy out of the Army. I cannot carry on," yet when it came before the O.C.—

Mr. Doney: Were you not impressed by that?

Mr. WITHERS: Yes, and I put up a case for more than one, but those boys who were farmers' sons had seen so much of the drudgery on farms that they said to their O.C., "I will not apply to be released to go back to my dad," and so what could be done?

Mr. Doney: Then they were very poor sons.

Mr. WITHERS: That is the position we are up against. I cannot see many farm labourers, in view of the conditions they left, wishing to come back to them.

Mr. Mann: Then that is the end of farming.

Mr. Doney: Your views are at variance with what the Prime Minister said a few days ago.

Mr. WITHERS: Before leaving the question of housing—though this is not quite in the same category—I may say I have known for many years that there are men in the Government employ who are at a decided disadvantage, such as fishing inspectors, and others, who are transferred from one place to another. A thrifty man gets a home and a roof over his head, and, though he may possibly not have finished paying

for it, the powers-that-be transfer him somewhere else. That man lets his house, possibly for less than he has to pay the person from whom he is purchasing it. He is transferred elsewhere and probably pays as much or more in rent there, and when his income tax assessment comes in he has to put down the rent he receives for his own house, in addition to his income, and he is not allowed anything for the rent he is paying somewhere else.

Mr. Mann: You are talking logically now.

Mr. Doney: That question was raised here by me three or four years ago.

Mr. WITHERS: It is a very serious thing, and I hope this Government will put it to the Commonwealth Government to see if some relief can be had in that direction. I know of the case of a man who was transferred from another place to Bunbury. I met his wife in the street, wheeling twin babies along, and I asked, "Where are you living?" She said, "We have a shed with no doors on it," and she had two children besides the twin babies. They were Government employees who had been transferred. I think the Government should see that employees in such cases—I do not include all railway men—should have accommodation found for them. The inspectors of police and certain others have houses found for them, but there are many other Government servants who are transferred about the country and for whom no provision is made. A man may leave a house, but he cannot save it for someone else. One is not allowed to buy the key, but someone else gets it.

The Minister for Works: There would not be any keys for those doorless houses.

Mr. WITHERS: Why should a man in a Government position be transferred to Bunbury, for instance, and not have a Government house to go into? This position is serious.

Mr. Rodoreda: At all events the Government houses would have doors.

Mr. WITHERS: Let me now deal with the matter of camps. I visualise that the concentration of effort before very long will be not only upon housing and the rural industries but on road work, for which there is great need. We shall develop and expand by a continuation, and expansion, of the road services that were being made available prior to the outbreak of hostilities.

When that time arrives I do not desire a return to the deplorable conditions under which road workers had to live in camps and tents all through the wet weather and under varying climatic conditions. In my electorate particularly, we have small towns situated fairly close to each other and there is no reason why we should not provide decent, movable hutments in the vicinity of townships so that the workers could enjoy some of the amenities available there. I have in mind such centres as Capel, Donnybrook, and Kirup. Under those conditions men could enjoy some of the life of the townships, and they would not require to go more than 10 miles to their work. It would be better to provide the men with decent housing conditions, with electric light and other conveniences, and then transport them to their jobs. I have discussed this matter with the engineers who say it could be done, and I hope the Government will do something about it.

The Minister for Works: You will be pleased to know that the Government has already developed some satisfactory proposals along those lines.

Mr. WITHERS: I am very pleased to hear that. Turning now to the railways, I shall not have much to say about that question because the member for Kalgoorlie outlined the position very well in the course of his contribution to the debate. He went into the whole matter thoroughly, and I do not intend to traverse the same ground. In my opinion the time has arrived when transport, whether it be by road or rail, will play an increasingly important part in the life and progress of this State. I would have a Minister for Transport, not a Minister for Railways, and that Minister should be in control of all forms of transportation. It is a big job, and a one-man job. Whether we nationalise the whole of our transport system or deal with it in some other manner, is a matter for the attention of one Minister. Should it be necessary to amend the Government Railways Act, Parliament has the power to do so. I am given to understand that the Act at present contains certain powers of which we could take advantage, but it would be better to amend the Act and place the responsibility completely on Parliament, with a Minister in full control.

The Minister for Justice: And instead of its being a Railway Department it would be a Transport Department.

Mr. WITHERS: Exactly! In New Zealand there were three Commissioners, but there the legislation was amended and all transport activities were placed under the control of a Minister for Transport. He dealt with transportation by water, air and land. That is what we want here. If Western Australia is to develop as we anticipate, we ought to be prepared for that eventuality.

We have had debates in this House in connection with the unification of railway gauges, and I am pleased that Opposition members are in favour of a uniform gauge between Perth and Kalgoorlie. Whether we can proceed beyond that point is a matter for consideration but, according to the figures submitted by the member for Kalgoorlie, it will cost a very large sum of money to transform our present system in order to bring it up to anything like the standard attained in South Africa and other places where heavier sleepers and better rollingstock are availed of. It is a question of whether it would not be wise to deal with the Kalgoorlie-Fremantle section as a first instalment and place it in a more satisfactory condition, rather than go further and perhaps have to change over to another system in a few years time. When the committee that is investigating the problem submits its report, favourable consideration should be given to it. As Sir Harold Clapp pointed out during a speech while he was in Perth, it is essential that we shall be big Australians.

While we continue fooling about in a tiddly-winking manner with affairs of State, we shall not make progress, and when I am dead and gone and my family is grown up the State will be in the same old position and the people in those days will still say, "The time is not yet ripe." We have adopted that attitude far too long. We have said that what was good enough for our fathers was good enough for us. So long as we adopt that attitude we cannot hope to progress. It has been said that Western Australia has not the population to warrant such an undertaking. We hope that the population will increase, but if we do not provide the facilities to cater for an augmented population, we shall lag behind the times. We must expand as our

population grows and, whether it be by rail or road, it is essential that the problems of transport shall be tackled. Do not let us continue adopting the attitude that the time is not ripe and that Western Australia is not ready for such progressive measures. The cessation of hostilities finds us unprepared. If something happened tomorrow and 100,000 people came to Western Australia, we would be unprepared and we would be found running hither and thither—like the blacks at the Battle of Pinjarra.

The Minister for Lands: That was when the McLarty clan arrived!

Mr. WITHERS: We must be prepared.

The Minister for Justice: Would it not be as well to have the link from Peterborough to Broken Hill dealt with?

Mr. WITHERS: If we are to cut off 250 miles on a journey to Sydney, why should we worry about Melbourne and Adelaide? We want to get to Sydney. If the Minister for Justice suggests that as the first section to be dealt with in preference to the Kalgoorlie-Fremantle section, I would not be in favour of that course.

The Minister for Justice: Yes, Fremantle-Kalgoorlie would be the first section and then the Peterborough-Broken Hill would be the next section.

Mr. WITHERS: That would be all right. I trust that when the committee reports and the Government gives consideration to the matter, Ministers will not adopt a narrow view.

Earlier I spoke about the processing of our primary products and in connection with factories and secondary industries the member for South Fremantle dealt with the Albany Woollen Mills. It may interest members to know that in Bunbury four years ago I was induced to participate in the formation of a company, the purpose of which was to go in for the knitting of soldiers' garments. After going to a good deal of trouble and failing to raise more than one-quarter of the capital required, we decided to go on with the business. For four years we have battled along thanks to the kindly assistance of the Minister for Industrial Development with the Treasurer supporting him. Although our demands were not for £50,000, we had a letter of credit for which we have been very thankful.

During the period we have been operating we have turned out hundreds of thousands of garments, as was mentioned in the "Sunday Times" last week-end. This year we were forced into the civilian trade because no more garments are required for the Army. We felt the effects of the change-over, just as the nation is feeling them, only in a lesser degree, but we have tried to fit in our machinery, etc., to undertake production for civilian needs.

We have orders up to November next to supply 10,000 bathers for Australia. That little mill, in the 12 months ended the 31st December last, spent with the Albany Woollen Mills a sum of £10,768 on wool yarn, and for the first five months of this year spent £3,542. Thus the knitting mills at Bunbury are assisting the woollen mills at Albany. The pullover I am wearing shows the kind of garment we were making for the Army before we started to make bathers. The bathers made at Bunbury are as popular as any made in Australia. We are selling them in Sydney and to Foy & Gibson in Melbourne and Adelaide. Foy & Gibson of Melbourne sent over their own motifs and paid us to put them on the bathers we were making for them. We are prepared to do that for any firm, so long as we can turn our local product to good account and employ local people. Last year while on military work we employed as many as 50 hands, and at present have 30 hands engaged. The labour is more or less that of girls and women, but for the girls it is filling the gap between the school-leaving age and the time when they can secure better positions. Last year we paid in wages £3,900.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: Do you give equal pay for equal work?

Mr. WITHERS: We are working under awards; we believe in the Arbitration Court. The output of the factory last year was valued at £23,000, and showed a profit.

Mr. Abbott: That was very wrong.

Mr. WITHERS: We have to make the factory pay. We are controlled by the Prices Commissioner, and so we cannot make very much profit. I mention these mills to show what can be accomplished by a little effort. I wish to pay a tribute to the Minister for Industrial Development and Mr. Fernie, who have been very helpful, and also to the Treasury for its as-

sistance. We still need more money to make a success of the factory and to enable us to compete in the civilian trade. The time is approaching when we may be hard hit. We want £3,000 or £4,000 worth of machinery if we are going to cater for civilian trade as we should do. I hope the people of the South-West will generously respond to the call and subscribe for shares. If we could erect a building of our own, we would probably be able to employ 60 to 70 girls, and thus the youth of the district would be spared from finding itself at a dead end.

There is one feature regarding decentralisation as mentioned by the member for South Fremantle. I appreciate the difficulties confronting the Albany Woollen Mills as well as those confronting the Bunbury Knitting Mills in the matter of freight charges. Over the years rural industries have been encouraged by being granted lower freights on super and other commodities, but secondary industries have not received similar consideration. The Minister should give consideration to the Bunbury Knitting Mills, the Albany Woollen Mills and the fruit processing factories at Bridgetown, Donnybrook and Mt. Barker so that they might get their produce to market at a reasonable rate. Similar freight concessions are granted to secondary industries in the Eastern States. I know what it is to have to pay freight on cotton brought here from South Australia. From Fremantle it has to be conveyed to Perth and Bunbury, and then freight has again to be paid to send the manufactured goods back to Perth. To create an organisation of the kind is a very costly business. The centre of distribution is always the metropolitan area. We get some decentralisation by manufacturing in the country, but we then revert to centralisation by having to send the finished article to the metropolitan area for distribution. Is it any wonder that the directors of the Albany Woollen Mills want to carry on their operations at Fremantle? We shall not get decentralisation until we get consideration in the matter of railway freights.

As a grand finale, I must refer to the Bunbury Harbour. I sympathise with the member for Albany in his efforts on behalf of Albany harbour. If that harbour were located at Bunbury, I would not be worrying the Government very much about the

harbour itself. I would be more concerned to get production to ship from the harbour. We would soon get the ships if we had the produce to put in them.

The Minister for Justice: That is very charitable.

Mr. WITHERS: If I were the member for Albany, I would be on the heels of the Government with a view to getting the Great Southern territory developed. In the Great Southern are millions of acres of land as good as any in the South-West, and what the member for Albany should do is to strive to get that land developed. Perhaps the hon. member can put some of the blame for its non-development on other members representing that part of the State. That is what is required—to produce something to ship from the harbour.

The Minister for Works: The member for Albany has been told that many times.

Mr. WITHERS: Yes, and it is his job to try to bring it about. When I took up this morning's paper I rubbed my eyes, though I thought I was awake, at seeing a reference to the huge development contemplated at the Fremantle Harbour. Bridges are to be built over the river and a sum of £350,000 has been provided for the works, of which £60,000 is to be spent right away. Before I sit down after what might be my final say in this House, I wish to ask the Minister for Works whether anything will be done in connection with the Bunbury harbour. There is every justification for something to be done there, as it is the outlet for the products of the back country. I have been harping on this subject every year for the 22 years I have been in Parliament. Possibly I have been as a voice crying in the wilderness.

When Sir George Buchanan visited Western Australia, he said, "I can give you a harbour, but the products of the back country would not justify the expenditure." Since then twenty years have rolled by and the scene has changed. Do not let another 20 years go by before something is done! The time is ripe. We have Collie coal at our back door, we have irrigation works and there is every opportunity to expand the production of the South-West a hundredfold within the next five or ten years. We should be able to send our products to their natural port, Bunbury. It will be a crying shame

if they are to be sent from the district to Fremantle, thus encouraging centralisation there. I ask the Minister for Works to give me a promise now. I ask him to take heed of what I say, because the question is most serious. I represent not so much Bunbury, but Murray-Wellington, Collie, Nelson and various other districts, because of the fact that I represent a district which has a port that should be the outlet for the products of all those districts. Therefore I represent the South-West, and not merely Bunbury.

Mr. Willmott: We must have a harbour for the South-West.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. WITHERS: Having ventilated the question of the Bunbury harbour once more, I point out that I did not do so merely for the purpose of mentioning the harbour. We have now progressed to the stage when our South-West Power Scheme is practically an established fact and, because of the progress that will take place when it is finally in operation, we must have something done for our Bunbury harbour.

MR. J. HEGNEY (Middle Swan) [8.42]: I desire, with other members, to congratulate the Premier on his elevation to the high office he now occupies. I also extend my congratulations to the new Minister for Railways and Transport, the member for Murchison. He has been a member of this House for many years and, in my opinion, was due for Ministerial preferment even earlier than when it came his way. I also congratulate the member for Roebourne on his appointment as Chairman of Committees. Since we started our labours at the end of July in this second session of Parliament, events of world importance have taken place. We have seen the overthrow of Nazi power in Germany and the submission of the Japanese nation to the Allied Forces. These matters can be regarded as of transcendent importance. With the establishment of international peace, the nations which have been at war will be enabled to apply themselves to the art of peace instead of the art of war. Most people were astounded at the invention of the atomic bomb. There is no question of its devastating effect upon the military rulers of Japan and the people of that country. Another atomic bomb of a different character has been dropped recently. It is a political bomb and it was dropped

in the United Kingdom. It will have lasting effects on the civilised world. There is no doubt about the tremendous effect it has had on Australia.

Mr. Mann: To our sorrow!

Mr. J. HEGNEY: Particularly will it affect those people in Australia who have come from England, Scotland and Ireland. Conservatism in England has been overthrown. As I say, there is no question that that political bomb—atomic bomb, I call it—has had a tremendous effect upon the people of the Old Country, and not merely upon those in the industrial areas. The rural population of England has also seen the light. The country people have entrusted the Government of the country to the Labour Party, with Mr. Attlee as its leader. His party will control the destinies of Great Britain for the next five years at least.

Mr. Mann: To the sorrow of the world!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. J. HEGNEY: One of the first acts of the new Labour Government in England has been to deal with the question of finance. It has set about the problem of nationalising banking in England and taking it under its own control. The Bank of England will be under the direction of the Government; at last it will not be manipulated and used by international financiers. No more will we have the spectacle of Sir Otto Niemeyer coming to Australia at the direction of the Bank of England to tell the Commonwealth Government what financial policy it shall pursue.

Hon. N. Keenan: You invited him.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: We did nothing of the kind. It was not an Australian Labour Government that invited him; it was the Bruce-Page Government, after it had indulged in an orgy of expenditure for many years. It brought Australia down to the depths, and so, in 1930, it invited Sir Otto Niemeyer to come to Australia to tell the Australian Government what financial policy it should pursue. I hope those times have gone for ever.

Mr. Mann: You have not invited him yet.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: I have no doubt that when the hon. member interjecting is transferred to the opposite side of the House, he will do so. I interjected during the debate when the member for Pingelly was discussing the unemployment position after the

1914-18 war. He told me that I would in due course have an opportunity to reply to his statement. He set out to contradict figures given by the member for Pilbara, who had quoted the unemployment figures for 1921.

Mr. Mann: Brotherly feeling!

Mr. J. HEGNEY: The member for Pingelly quoted from the official Year Book, it is true, but the figures were not complete, yet he put them to the House as being the volume of unemployment in Australia at that period. But he did not give the whole of the facts which should have been made available to the House. Amongst other things, the member for Pingelly said that the viewpoint of the member for Pilbara had been expressed to bolster up arguments in favour of a further transference of powers to the Commonwealth. He went on—

The member for Pilbara asserted that two years after the conclusion of the last war there were 125,000 unemployed in Australia. This was not so. If the hon. member likes to consult the Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, he will find that the great unemployment problem which we all deplored at the time, did not take place until about 12 years after the conclusion of the 1914-18 war.

I propose to quote from the Labour Report of 1940, No. 31, issued by the Commonwealth Statistician. The heading of this extract is "Unemployment from all causes in Australia." The figures were taken at the time of the census and related to the position in April, 1921. The total unemployed then was 160,900 and not, as stated by the member for Pingelly, only 40,549. The figures he quoted were supplied by the trade unions; but during that year and even up to the depression days, there was no exact record kept of the total number of unemployed. Some of the trade unions had out-of-work books containing the names of unemployed members, but there were many members who never went near a union office when they were out of work in order to register or seek employment, although many employers contacted trade unions when they were seeking employees. The figures supplied by the member for Pingelly were an understatement of the facts. The report from which I quote states—

The particulars in the following tables are based on information furnished by the secretaries of trade unions, and the number of members of unions regularly reporting has now reached over 500,000, consisting predominantly

of males and representing about 54 per cent. of the total trade union membership and between 20 and 25 per cent. of all wage and salary earners.

The figures quoted by the member for Pingelly were one-fifth of the total. I interjected at the time of his speech, because I knew what I was speaking about. I was amongst the unemployed myself in those days. I had worked in New South Wales and in this State, and I knew that there was an army of unemployed in New South Wales; unemployed tradesmen and workmen of every description were out of work and could not obtain employment. The same state of affairs applied in Western Australia. Jobs were difficult to get, and the figures given by the member for Pilbara were exact according to the census taken at that time.

Many questions have been discussed in this House; one that is of paramount importance is employment. Every credit is due to the representatives of the Australian Government at recent international conferences—both Mr. Beasley and Dr. Evatt—for their striving to induce representatives of other Governments to pledge themselves to a policy of full employment for workers inside their countries. Dr. Evatt was successful in persuading the recent conference to agree to that proposition. That policy has been adopted and incorporated in agreements subscribed to. So the Australian Government representatives have done an excellent job in that respect. From now on, the question of the standard of living and hours of labour and other matters definitely relating to labour will be in the forefront. During the war, there was a determined effort by the trade unions of Australia to seek a shorter working week. They have sought to obtain it through the Commonwealth Government.

It is preferable that the Commonwealth Government should have power to inaugurate a 40-hour week on a Commonwealth-wide basis instead of leaving it to the State Governments, in which case we might have a Labour Government in one State with a 40-hour week, while the adjacent State, with a non-Labour Government, refused to fall into line. If there is to be a shortening of hours for which the trade unions have been striving, and in connection with which there will be a good deal of propaganda in the future, immediately men return from the war and

enter industry, it is preferable that it should be inaugurated on an Australia-wide footing. In this State, by administrative Act, the Government has inaugurated a shorter working week of 44 hours. It has tried to have legislation passed with that end in view, but the measures have been rejected on several occasions by the conservative Legislative Council. However, by administrative Act, the 44-hour week has been extended to Government employees, and there is no question but that has resulted in many workers in private industry enjoying a similar concession. On the other hand, we have the adjacent State of South Australia with men working on a 48-hour basis; and when it comes to a question of competition between industry in this State and that in South Australia, the cry is raised that Western Australian industry cannot compete with South Australian industry because of the shorter working week prevailing here. For that reason, it would be better for this question to be tackled on a Commonwealth-wide basis.

Then there is also the question of a better standard of living for the workers. That is of paramount importance. The workers are anxious for a complete inquiry to be held on a Commonwealth-wide basis into the question of a decent standard of living for the people of this country who have to rear families. Before very long, the Commonwealth Government will be pressed to institute an exhaustive inquiry similar to that undertaken by the Piddington Commission over 25 years ago. There is need for reform in that direction, because some of the courts have no definite guidance. I propose to quote remarks by the then Chief Judge of the Arbitration Court made on the 12th August, 1940. He said—

Candid opinions voiced by judges at the Full Arbitration Court's basic wage inquiry today revealed shortcomings in Australia's wage fixation machinery which have compelled the Court—according to the Chief Judge (Sir George Beeby)—to rely on "expedients."

A vital question on which the judges confessed themselves without clear guidance was, "Should the basic wage be determined on a minimum needed to keep a family on a reasonable standard, or on the amount industry could pay?"

"The industrial people of this country should share in increased productivity arising from the joint effort of all factors," the Chief Judge declared. "They should share in the form of a higher standard of living; but

the thing is to find a measuring rod. Quite frankly, all our wage fixation has been an 'expedient.' We have done the best we can under the circumstances to find a minimum standard for the community. We have no rules to show what share of total production should go in wages, profits, and public services. We have to consider the accepted distribution in various countries and get as near to a working basis as we can."

That indicates that the Commonwealth Arbitration Court had to adopt an expedient in determining the means of livelihood for workers throughout Australia. There were no set principles laid down. It is high time that this matter was tackled on a proper and more scientific basis than in the past. The Commonwealth Government, therefore, will be called upon to do something in that direction. One of the four freedoms contained in the Atlantic Charter is the freedom from fear and another is the freedom from want. Unless we provide full employment and guarantee economic security for the people they will not be able to give of their best, and it will be difficult for them to maintain themselves and rear their families. Those principles of the Atlantic Charter are very fine and it is to be hoped that they will be achieved. They are well worth fighting for.

I heard the member for Bunbury say that workers in our country towns and outback areas should be provided with better accommodation. A Minister interjected that the Government was giving attention to that matter. Representations were made some years ago on behalf of these people. Workers in the country have difficulty in the summertime in keeping their food. It would not be a hard task to provide them with refrigerators which are a modern device and would be of great advantage. In addition it would not be difficult to provide mobile houses for people working on jobs in the country. Those workers are far removed from the ordinary amenities enjoyed by people in the towns, and the cost of providing refrigerators would soon be regained in the smaller losses of food. The question of housing has been raised. I do not intend to labour it because there is not much more that can be said on the issue. The Lieutenant-Governor's Speech makes reference to the fact that it is proposed to build houses on the day labour basis. That is long overdue, because the Workers' Homes Board has to consider at times how to let contracts for the

building of houses. The board has many applications for homes, but hundreds of them cannot be built because it has had to depend on private contractors.

I know, from frequent contact with the Workers' Homes Board that it does not let large numbers of contracts at a time, because if it did the tenders would be increased owing to the small number of contractors. Consequently the board had to adopt a policy of keeping down the number of contracts it allowed to go out at a time. That is wrong. The same thing applies to the building of the McNess homes for those people who have little money and for whom the late Sir Charles McNess made a grant. Those homes are to be provided to suit the needs of old age pensioners, widows and others who are in difficult economic circumstances. Contracts for these places were not let because of the increasing prices and the difficulties of contracting. If the Government develops a staff of its own, as it has done in connection with its main road activities, there is no reason why it should not undertake a big programme of home-building under its own direction and side by side with private contractors. The costs of such houses have been alluded to in this debate. It is true that costs are high today, but the increase can be accounted for because of the rises in prices and in wages.

The basic wage four years ago was £4 5s. a week whereas today it is £5 less 1d. That is a substantial increase and has had an effect on the cost of building houses. As a consequence a house that could be built for £750 or £800, pre-war, is costing today—and no wonder—about £1,000. There are, in my electorate, some war factories. One is the Welshpool factory and there are two aircraft factories at Bayswater. Because munitions production has ceased large numbers of workers there are looking for employment. They want these factories carried on so that they may be engaged in producing something of use to the community, and in maintaining large industrial establishments here. The Commonwealth Government points out that under the Constitution it has no power to keep these places in production. Therefore the opportunity is given to the State Government to take over these particular factories. It would be a pity to see them idle. They are extensive in character and provide many amenities for the workers.

It is hoped that this Government will give every attention to acquiring them so as to keep employed these workers who will otherwise be dismissed.

The member for Mt. Marshall made some reference to the old age pensions, etc., and complained about the means test. It is well known that the party to which he belongs was in power in the Commonwealth Parliament for years. The Country Party formed part of that Government for a long time, and it brought down a national insurance scheme. As a matter of fact two actuaries, Sir Walter Kinnear and the late Mr. Bennett from this State, were engaged for two years in going into the question of a national insurance scheme for Australia. At the end of that time they submitted a report. After a lot of turmoil in the Commonwealth Parliament a national insurance Act was proclaimed. As Mr. Menzies said recently, when he visited this State, he resigned because the Act was not continued in operation. It was not put into effect because of the fact that the Country Party, in the Commonwealth Parliament, sabotaged the Act. It cost the Commonwealth £400,000 by way of compensation to organisations that were set up for the purpose of dealing with this problem. I know of one man who left good employment and then had to find another job! Through the internecine strife in the Government at that time, particularly as far as the Country Party was concerned, the scheme for national insurance was sabotaged, and yet for years past that party has said there should be no means test—

Mr. North: There is one in New Zealand, is there not?

Mr. J. HEGNEY: I have all the provisions of that national insurance scheme before me here. The worker had to contribute 1s. 6d. per week towards the cost of the scheme and all it provided for was medical benefits, and when he reached the age of 65 years he got the old-age pension. Under the scheme the wife and children did not receive medical benefits, which had to be paid for by the worker. The only benefit the worker received, when he reached the age of 65, was a pension of £1, and the wife received 15s., a discrimination between men and women in that regard. If a man was out of work or had not made any contribution in the last two or three years before reaching the age of 65, neither he nor his wife were entitled to

the old-age pension. The basis of that scheme was too conservative altogether, and it was confined to persons whose income did not exceed £7 per week. All it did was to take the responsibility for providing an old-age pension from the taxpayers of Australia and put it on the shoulders of the workers. The benefits to be paid under the scheme were infinitely less than are provided now by the Commonwealth Labour Government under its social legislation.

The benefit accruing to people under the recent Commonwealth legislation is much more liberal than what was set out in the National Insurance Scheme propounded by the Lyons Government. Education has come into its own in recent years and many people who formerly did not believe in kindergartens and other phases of education are today great subscribers to them. I am glad that the Minister for Education is an ex-school teacher and I know he will bring a lot of enthusiasm and ability to his present job.

Mr. Mann: And no money. The Prime Minister will not grant us assistance for education.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: I say the Minister has ability and enthusiasm and I know he will do a great job for Western Australia if he remains in that position. I think that being Minister for Education is a full-time job, and there is no doubt that the amount of money made available from revenue for education in this State is inadequate. The Minister has recently made representations to the Commonwealth Government to provide £10,000,000 for the purpose of extra grants for education in the States, and it is to be hoped that the Commonwealth Labour Government will eventually agree to that proposition and provide money to the respective States for increased activities in education. If one goes into the classrooms of schools in any part of the State one sees that many of the desks, as well as the interiors, need overhauling. I have had the opportunity to see the interior of many State schools in the country areas, and there is room for great improvement in them.

In my own electorate there are 13 State schools. I keep in touch with them and, whilst progress is being made, there is still room for great improvement. As I say, I am pleased that the Minister for Education is an ex-school teacher, because he knows the

requirements and, if he gets the funds for the purpose, I feel certain he will be an excellent administrator of the Education Department. I come next to the question, mentioned here two or three sessions ago, of raising the school-leaving age to 15 years, the ultimate goal being 16 years. It is 16 years in England and I believe it will shortly be 16 years in New South Wales. The present trend of educationists is to keep children at school for a longer period than in the past. I am glad that we now have a Minister for Transport and I feel sure that, when he eventually gets into his stride, he will do a good job.

We have heard a lot about the unification of railways, which is a matter in the forefront of affairs in the Commonwealth today. When I was quite a youth the unification of the railways was a matter of public importance. During the reign of the Fisher Labour Government, when Western Australia was connected by rail with South Australia, the question of unification of the railway systems was exercising the minds of the Governments of the States and the Commonwealth, but unfortunately the proposition fell through then. Subsequent to that there have been reports and investigations of costs in respect of this problem of Commonwealth-wide importance, but on each occasion the matter fell through. I have not yet had an opportunity to read an exact copy of the excellent report on unification on this occasion, but from the point of view of Australia I hope the matter will be solved, and that eventually the whole of the Commonwealth will have a unified system of railways. In earlier times it was proposed to build the line down south of the river, but I heard the other day that it is now suggested the line should come on this side of the river. At that earlier period it was suggested that the line should cross the Helena River at West Midland and go south of the river to Fremantle, but apparently the route has been altered in the recent report.

It would have been interesting could we have got Sir Harold Clapp, who issued the report, to address members on this issue. A private meeting could have been arranged, at which we would have heard more from him, as the exponent of this proposition, than we have got from the newspapers. Sir Harold Clapp addressed various bodies here, and I understand he is to address the Metropolitan

Council of the A.L.P. on this question for an hour or so tomorrow night. If a meeting could have been arranged it would have given members an opportunity to get much more detailed information, so that when the matter was discussed in this House we would be more fully informed than we are at present.

I understand that the Commonwealth Government has passed a law and is to give effect to the nationalisation of inter-State airways. I hope this Government, through the Minister for Transport, will also tackle the problem of air transport within the State because, if it is to be effective, it will have to be effective throughout Australia, not only in respect of the Commonwealth Government operating air services inter-State, but this Government will have to operate air services intra-State, under the control of the Minister for Transport. This is a matter of considerable importance, so that we may get about quickly from one place to another. There are one or two other matters dealt with in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech that should be mentioned. They raise questions that have been submitted to the people who have endorsed them for submission to, and approval by, Parliament. One refers to the reform of the Legislative Council and the other to the promotions appeal board. The latter matter was dealt with in legislation last session. The Bill was passed in this House by a substantial majority. It was approved by the representatives of the people fresh from an election. That legislation was sent to another place where it was peremptorily rejected. The Legislative Council defied the will of the people and, in my opinion, went far beyond its powers in doing so.

The Upper House is long overdue for an overhaul. As to the question of liberalising the franchise for that Chamber, I would prefer to vote for the abolition of the Upper House altogether. I regard that branch of the Legislature as an anachronism in our Parliamentary life. When the people elect representatives of one party in sufficient numbers to entrust them with the government of the country—I care not whether the majority consists of members of the Country and Democratic League, the National Party, the Liberal Party, the Communists or the Labour Party—the members of that Government should have the power to carry out the mandate received from the people and

govern the State accordingly. They should be in a position to give effect to their policy without it being restricted, mutilated or rejected by one section of the Legislature not fully representative of the people as a whole. Reform in that direction is long overdue. A revolution in that respect took place in England where years ago the Reform Bill was passed, the effect of which was to take away from the House of Lords its power to reject Bills completely. If that system operated here, it would be more democratic.

For the members of the Legislative Council to accept the responsibility of rejecting measures that have been submitted to the people for their consideration and have been endorsed through the ballot-box, is truly reactionary. Certainly it is not democratic. We know that at present both the British and American Governments refuse recognition to the governments of certain European countries because those in authority are not fully representative of the people. The time will come when the Legislative Council will have to recognise the will of the people and submit to their expressed desires. The members of that Chamber will either have to reform themselves, or an appeal will have to be made elsewhere to effect an alteration in the conditions that now exist. I certainly hope the Government will devote serious consideration to these matters and, during the current session, submit the proposals I have mentioned to Parliament for endorsement. Should that action be taken, I hope the legislation will receive full support.

Question put and passed; the Address adopted.

BILLS (11)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Soil Conservation.
Introduced by the Minister for Lands (for the Premier).
- 2, Closer Settlement Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Lands.
- 3, Mine Workers' Relief (War Service) Act Amendment.
- 4, Mines Regulation Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Mines.
- 5, Electoral Act Amendment.
- 6, Constitution Acts Amendment (No. 1).
- 7, Constitution Acts Amendment (No. 2).
Introduced by the Premier (for the Minister for Justice).
- 8, National Fitness.
Introduced by the Minister for Lands (for the Minister for Education).

- 9, Government Employees (Promotions Appeal Board).
- 10, Motor Vehicle (Third Party Insurance) Act Amendment.
- 11, Rights in Water and Irrigation Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Premier (for the Minister for Works).

House adjourned at 9.32 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 4th September, 1945.

	PAGE
Questions: Tobacco—(a) as to price for local leaf	488
(b) as to drop in production, costs, etc.	489
Commonwealth Employment Service, as to legality of proposed office	490
Fruit and vegetables, as to committee's report on marketing	490
Water Supply, as to provision at Donnybrook	490
Wheat and wool, as to oversea disposal of production	490
Tractors, as to shortage	491
Egg powder, as to waste by Services	491
Railways, as to boiler repairs, oil fuel and mileage costs	491
South Perth schools, proposed additional buildings	492
Bills: Mining Act Amendment, 1R.	492
Inspection of Scaffolding Act Amendment, 1R.	492
Builders' Registration Act Amendment, 1R.	492
Supreme Court Act Amendment, 1R.	492
Mine Workers' Relief (War Service) Act Amendment, 2R.	492
Mines Regulation Act Amendment, 2R.	494
Government Employees (Promotions Appeal Board), 2R.	497
National Fitness, Message 2R.	501
Motor Vehicle (Third Party Insurance) Act Amendment, 2R.	503
Rights in Water and Irrigation Act Amendment, 2R.	505
Constitution Acts Amendment (No. 2), 2R.	506

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

QUESTIONS.

TOBACCO.

(a) *As to Price for Local Leaf.*

Mr. McDONALD asked the Minister for Agriculture:

1, Is he aware that at a meeting of Manjimup tobacco growers last Friday week it was decided by 98 per cent. of the growers at the meeting that they would not grow tobacco any further unless guaranteed a price of 3s. per pound?

2, Is he aware that in 1942 at a conference attended by the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Mr. Scully, the Federal Prices Commissioner and representatives of the