

COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.*Council's Message.*

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

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 1), £2,500,000.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

House adjourned at 6.10 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 15th August, 1939.

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

QUESTION—INDUSTRIES DEPARTMENT, DELEGATION.*Travelling Allowances.*

Hon. E. H. H. HALL asked the Chief Secretary: What were the respective amounts of travelling expenses and allowances paid to (1) the Minister for Industrial Development (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, M.L.A.), (2) the Secretary of the Industries Department (Mr. Macartney) whilst visiting the Eastern States recently in an endeavour to persuade Eastern States' manufacturers to start factories in this State?

The HONORARY MINISTER (for the Chief Secretary) replied: Covering the full period of six weeks—(1) £86 3s. 6d., and (2) £82 0s. 1d.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.*Fourth Day.*

Debate resumed from the 9th August.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [4.35]: Before dealing with some aspects of primary production, I desire, on behalf of the farmers of the South-West and, I think, of most of the residents of that part of the State, to express our sympathy regarding the position in which the wheat-growing section of that great industry find themselves. Their position to-day is undoubtedly tragic, and it calls for not only sympathy on the part of all who are in a position to assist, but for practical help as well. A few years ago hundreds of settlers in the South-West experienced what I might describe as a long period of below-the-bread-line existence, and consequently they realised very fully the gravity of the present situation throughout the wheat belt. At such times as the present there are many who will offer expressions of sympathy, but there are very few people who really know, or are in a position to know, the depth of mental anxiety from which these people suffer in the position in which they find themselves to-day. They cannot realise the utter disappointment, the haunting fear of abject failure that each day and night overshadows the existence of these producers who are making strenuous efforts to succeed, nor can they be expected to understand, and fully comprehend, what it means to suffer privations which actually involve the lack of the absolute necessities of life, not only for themselves but for their womenfolk and their children. Those unfortunate producers did not ask for charity; they did not actually seek help. All the South-West settlers wanted a few years ago was an opportunity to win through by virtue of their own endeavours, and a price for their commodities that would enable them to live. That is actually, I understand, the position, in many instances, of the farmers on the wheat belt to-day. The price offered for wheat in the markets of the world at the present time is far below the cost of production, and because of indifference in many quarters the situation is not improving but is gradually becoming worse. I have been told on very good authority that quite a number of these people have been haunted with the fear that they will

eventually have to walk off their holdings. To lose the result of the labour of the best part of a lifetime and to have no decent prospects of employment ahead of them is a serious position for any body of men. It makes the outlook for these people, unless early assistance is granted, precarious in the extreme. This State cannot permit that kind of thing to happen. I want to pay a tribute to the Premier, who, I am satisfied, is very earnest in his desire to render some assistance, and that quickly. One abuse that frequently creeps into our system of government, and is often exasperating, is the haggling that occurs when prompt action for the alleviation of distress is essential. That is the position existing to-day. The prices quoted for wheat in a world which is spending millions of pounds daily on warlike preparations is ridiculous; it is nothing less than a travesty on trade and on humanity. I greatly regret that the Premiers in conference last week failed to agree in their deliberations, and to put relief machinery into operation.

Hon. J. Cornell: That is the weakness of democracy.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I believe that the Federal Government and the Premiers of most of the States were very much in earnest and endeavoured to find a solution of the problem. They honestly wanted to assist the wheatgrowers. That it should have been a few individuals in the Country Party who were responsible for wrecking that conference fills one with disgust; and that is putting it fairly mildly. I feel almost constrained to add that I am sorry to think that that Country Party Government represents the State of my birth. However, that is the position and it is indeed serious. One feels compelled to say that it is a pity a great many of those so-called friends of the farmers are not obliged to tighten their belts in a time of crisis and to go through some of the troubles and experiences that the men they are supposed to represent have to endure.

Hon. C. F. Baxter interjected.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Of course, the Victorian Government is responsible for the present position. I hope that the Prime Minister and the Premiers will meet again at the earliest possible moment and make available whatever assistance is possible for the wheatgrowers. The justification for aid

being given to rural industries threatened with collapse can be found in the history of the dairying industry in the South-West. Not that I believe the dairy farmers during their years of tribulation received all the assistance they should have obtained, but at any rate it was made possible for them to hold on, and by the exercise of a good deal of courage and sacrifice all those that were in earnest were able to weather the storm and experience better times. To-day that section of the community is comparatively prosperous. The people are contented and are quite satisfied to labour on, producing national wealth from which the whole State derives benefit. A good deal of money was involved in assisting those people, just as considerable expenditure will be entailed in assisting the wheatgrowers; but that money was not lost, far from it. I propose, before I sit down, to quote a few figures to indicate that that money was wisely spent and that the industry concerned is rapidly reimbursing the State for the expenditure. I desire to repeat what has been mentioned many times when the losses incurred in the establishment of the dairying industry have been referred to. We must not forget that the farmers are not responsible for the whole of the loss, much of which was due to faulty management and some wicked waste, which, as we all know, took place.

There is in the South-West to-day a number of butter factories all of which, I understand, are doing well. One is not able to scrutinise the balance sheets of proprietary companies, but one co-operative company publishes a balance sheet regularly: I refer to the South-West Dairy Farmers' Co-operative Co. A scrutiny of that company's figures for the year ended the 30th June last is most illuminating, and in a measure serves to prove what I am endeavouring to illustrate, namely, the fact that the dairying industry is repaying the State for money expended years ago. I have purposely kept my figures down to as low a minimum as possible because I quite realise that it is difficult for members to carry a large number of figures in their minds. Last year that company handled 326,071 cans of cream. The aggregate weight in cans of that intake was no less than 5,534,145 lbs., a very creditable undertaking for one company. From that was manufactured

6,765,218 lbs. of commercial butter, again a splendid record, and one that is all the more praiseworthy by reason of the fact that that figure represents an increase on the previous year of 283 tons. Butter sales amounted to £494,383 and trading sales to £38,440, which brought the turnover of the company to over half a million pounds. Both the butter production and the turnover of the company constituted records for the State. Compared with the older-established and bigger concerns of the Eastern States these figures are perhaps not outstanding, but they are exceptionally good for Western Australia. When the co-operative company was formed some years ago it was thought that a production of one ton of butter per week could be regularly maintained. That was advanced with the idea of inducing the few suppliers who were operating to send in their cream. Even that small amount of one ton per week was not realised in the first year, for the out-turn was only 23 tons. Last year the company produced 3,020 tons, a splendid record indeed.

There is hope yet for the wheatgrowers. The present low prices will not always remain. Wheat may never reach the figure at which it stood some years ago, but it must reach a price that is payable. The price of butter fat has an important bearing on the industry of which I am speaking. When the people of the South-West were struggling, as they were during the depression, the price of butter fat was as low as 8d. a lb. During last year suppliers were paid on the basis of 1s. 5d. per lb.

Hon. L. Craig: Certain deductions were made from that price.

Hon. W. J. MANN: The price was 1s. 5d. for choice cream, with margins for first and second grade. From the profits earned by the company a bonus of 1¼d. per lb. was returned to the suppliers, making the total payment 1s. 6¼d. From that figure had to be deducted the equalisation contribution. Taking also into consideration the deduction for cream cartage, the settler received an average of 16.56d. per lb., a little over 1s. 4½d. for his butter fat. That represented a splendid return, and has made the outlook for the industry very much brighter. The manufacturing costs were about 2.15d. per lb., which is the lowest in the history of the company.

These figures are full of significance. When Parliament authorised the group

settlements, existing records disclosed that Western Australia was sending to the Eastern States about £1,000 per day for butter. The company to which I have referred last year distributed to its suppliers £366,338. Instead, therefore, of Western Australia sending out £1,000 per day for butter, the company in question returned £1,000 per day to its suppliers. Other companies are also returning a considerable amount of money to the dairy farmers, but I am unable to quote the figures. This is a splendid achievement when one remembers the background from which it has sprung.

I hope I shall not be considered too parochial if I say that the South-West is destined to be one of the major mainstays of Western Australia. Providence has been very generous in the matter of soil, rainfall, climate, sunshine, fertility and close proximity to the seaboard. The Government recently embarked upon a campaign for the expansion of industry. I have nothing to say against the scheme, and wish it well. There are, however, some requirements for primary production that could be considered before we embark upon a scheme of this nature. I would refer in the first place to the need for improved harbour facilities in the South-West. It is neither a fantastic theory nor a Utopian fancy to predict that before very long a much greater volume of primary products will be available for disposal overseas from the South-West than is forthcoming to-day, and that, provided the opportunity is afforded to them to visit these ports, ships will be able to load close to the points of production.

We are living in an age of intense competition, and now is no time for any industry to be saddled with unnecessary and unwarranted disabilities. At the present time the bulk of dairy and other products to be sent away from the South-West is weighted with 127 miles of unnecessary railage.

Hon. J. Cornell: You would not suggest that a 14,000 ton boat should call at Bunbury?

Hon. W. J. MANN: I suggest that the deepening of the Bunbury Harbour will have to be undertaken sooner or later, and that if we are to continue to compete in the world's markets we will have to get the steamers to go to the nearest ports to pick

up the cargo. There is no doubt about it that the steamship lines are only too glad to get freight, and whether it be offered at the ports of Bunbury, Albany, Geraldton or Fremantle, those lines will pick it up. The existing condition of affairs has taken from the pockets of the primary producers in the South-Western part of the State, hundreds of thousands of pounds because the producers have had to pay unnecessary freight charges. There are harbours at Bunbury, Busselton and Flinder's Bay, and all have claims. Bunbury has built up an excellent reputation for dispatch and for economical working, but it is denied a great deal of the trade it should have, because a promise made to the people away back in 1896 has never been properly fulfilled. At that time far-seeing men recognised the great opportunities that existed in that part of the State, and a promise was made that if the people would clear the land and build up their herds the required facilities for disposal of the products—the facilities to include harbour accommodation—would be provided. The people were told that by the time trade had reached reasonable dimensions all the facilities would be waiting for them. A scheme was advanced and put into operation to provide six berths at Bunbury, two for vessels of 26 feet draught, two for vessels of 22 feet draught, and two for ships with a draught of 18 feet. Four of those berths are useless except for coastal vessels. Bunbury not only requires but must have a minimum of two additional berths providing 30 feet of water.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Is not the harbour in the wrong place?

Hon. W. J. MANN: There has been a great deal of controversy on that question, but as I am not an engineer I am not competent to express an opinion. Personally I have often thought it a great pity that before so much money was expended on the original idea more extensive inquiries were not made. However, I am not prepared to debate that point, because as I have said, I am not qualified to express an opinion, and anything I may say will not carry much weight in that direction. What I am here to urge, however, is that the Government should set about to fulfil the promise originally made to the people and give Bunbury the shipping facilities that it ultimately must have.

It has been computed that there are 775 miles of railway in the South-West serving about 24,000 square miles of country. One can see to-day that that area is returning considerable revenue and will continue to do so. There is a splendid spirit of optimism in that part of the State at the present time, and settlers are coming in weekly or indeed almost daily. Some four years ago there were hundreds of abandoned group farms; to-day those abandoned farms are considerably fewer in number, and those that have been taken up are being worked by a good type of people, many of whom have come from the Eastern States and New Zealand, and some also from abroad. Those people have settled down to work in a manner that is most encouraging. When any one advances a claim for expenditure on the harbour he should be able to supplement that claim by quoting reasonable figures. I intend to submit to the House figures that will show the growth of the trade at the port of Bunbury. Since 1909, and in the early portion of the intervening period, the trade was very small, but after that no less a total than 10,000,000 tons of South-West products have gone over the Bunbury jetty. That is a tidy amount. A good deal of it of course was timber, and we know that timber is a very valuable freight, not only for the State from the railway point of view, but for the workers responsible for its production and the companies carrying on the business.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Some of that timber went to South America.

Hon. W. J. MANN: The timber trade has been of immense value to the State, and particularly was that so in the years gone by.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Have you figures showing the value of the timber?

Hon. W. J. MANN: I have not, but any one who knows the value of a load or a ton of timber can work out the figures for himself. What has gone over that jetty in the past, however, is insignificant compared with what will go over in the future. I have taken the figures from the March Quarterly Abstract—the latest I have been able to get—and these are, of course, official. I find that for the 12 months ended the 30th June, 1938, Bunbury sent abroad exports valued at £1,639,055. One does not like to make comparisons, but I intend to do so in the kindest way. The exports from Bunbury

in that year were nearly half-a-million pounds in excess of the exports from Geraldton, and seven or eight times greater than the exports from Albany or Wyndham. I will not go any further.

Hon. J. Cornell: The Almighty has been kind to that part of the State.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Never mind about the Almighty. We want the Government to stand up to its responsibility and make it possible for even the figures that I have quoted to be increased still further. After all it is the trade of the State, and the State will share in the benefits that will follow. For the first nine months of the present year the exports were valued at nearly double those of the next outer port of importance, or indeed any other port of the State except, of course, Fremantle. Thus I am on pretty sound ground when I say that we have a good case. There is no need to offer an apology for emphasising the importance of providing adequate harbour facilities in the South-West. The claim can be justified, and the figures I have quoted provide incontestable evidence to support my case. I shall go further and show by comparison the rapid growth in primary production that has taken place in the South-West during the past few years. As the 1938-39 figures are not yet available, I have taken the figures for 1937-38, and for the purpose of comparison will quote the figures for five years earlier, 1932-33. I have also taken at random nine items, and for those I can quote complete figures. Those items are potatoes, fruit, honey, tobacco, sawn timber, wool, cream, cheese and condensed milk. We find that the value of the production of these articles in the South-West for the year 1932-33 aggregated £1,229,008, while in 1937-38 the value had increased to £2,437,781, or £1,198,773 more than the figures for five years earlier. In other words, the value of the products that I mentioned nearly doubled itself in that comparatively short period. That is a very good story to be able to relate, and it is also refreshing to be able to quote such figures after having, as we have done in years gone by, asked for assistance and encouragement for the dairying industry. That figure of nearly 2½ million pounds for one year represents only part of the increase; because we have, as additional sources of production, horse breeding, sheep breeding, production of fat lambs, dairy and fat cattle, pigs,

poultry, barley, fodder, clover seeds, hewn timber and other products. Members will note that I have not mentioned wheat and oats. The value of the production of those items, added to the nine I have mentioned, would make an aggregate of between £3,000,000 and £4,000,000 for the year. That, I think, is splendid, and considering the limited area and the disabilities of the past, it is something to be proud of. In 1932-33—although there had been something of a boom beforehand—we had 427 acres of tobacco crop. In those days that was considered to be as far as we dared go. Five years later, however, the area was nearly trebled, because we then had 1,193 acres under tobacco crop, the value of which, according to the Governor's Speech, was £50,000. The South-West is producing tobacco leaf of a quality equal to that of the best in Australia. The average quality is actually better than that of the other States. As the demand is still far from being supplied, there is a big field ahead for tobacco growing in the South-West.

Permanent pastures in five years increased from 293,926 acres to 415,205 acres. Anyone with a knowledge of agriculture will realise what that increased production means.

For many years past the question of the Bunbury harbour has been discussed by various conferences. In my province we have what is known as the South-West Conference, which is a gathering of all the local governing bodies, the agricultural societies, the Chambers of Commerce, progress associations and kindred bodies. Each year for the past 10 years the matter of the Bunbury harbour has been brought up, not by one society only, but by a number. It is admitted that the Government has expressed sympathy, but that is about all we have secured.

Hon. J. Cornell: It is like the Fair Rents Bill in this House.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Yes, possibly. Facilities for cool storage have also been urgently desired because of the rapid development of the fat lamb and dairying industries. This matter was referred to at the last meeting of the South-West Conference, the report of the executive of which states—

The executive gave this matter their consideration and came to the conclusion that nothing effective could be done until port facilities were available, and they feel that every possible effort must be made to secure

adequate depth in the harbour before cool stores can be successful.

That is an added reason for Bunbury's claim. The South-West Conference is one of extreme value, and the result of its deliberations is to the effect that until the harbour is deepened so that ships of the required size may berth, nothing can be done.

Improved facilities are also required at the port of Busselton, which will ensure to it the trade of its hinterland. The port of Busselton, although small, has been extremely useful in the past. It has a number of distinct advantages and should be used a great deal more. The port, too, has gained an enviable name for despatch and general working. Older residents of the port say they cannot remember one boat ever being held up during the past 30 odd years because the men refused to work. The jetty was damaged about a week ago, when a steamer sheared into it and almost chopped a piece off the end. One of the most urgent requirements, excepting the repair of that damage, at the moment is the provision of electric light at the end of the jetty. This is only a small matter, but the lack of sympathy shown by the Railway Department, which is responsible for that jetty, is extraordinary. Portion of the jetty is lighted by the municipality, which has gone as far as it can. From its boundary to the end of the jetty all is darkness. The fact that four seamen have lost their lives there in recent years at night does not seem to concern the department at all. This matter is a hardy annual and, although the request seems trifling, it is really important. I hope the Government will at the earliest opportunity take such a step as will ensure the safety of the men working on the jetty. I cannot understand why a Labour Government should ignore the desires of the Lumpers' Union for so many years as the present Government has done.

Flinders Bay also claims attention. It will bear investigation because of its growing importance. The port has 37 feet of water at low tide within a few yards of the shore, and 40 feet of water at high tide.

Before leaving the butter and allied industries, I urge upon the Government the necessity for dealing effectively with the distribution of margarine. If people are foolish enough to use margarine when they can obtain high-grade butter, of course we cannot

prevent them; but I protest against the sale of margarine, which is an inferior product and which is made to resemble butter so closely that many people are actually deceived. I was recently at a home and saw margarine on the table. I jocularly said to the good lady, "Don't you believe in the country you live in?" After regarding me suspiciously, she asked, "Why?" I replied, "You use margarine." She then said, "Is that margarine?" I said, "I am a rather bad judge if it is not." The lady then said to her husband, "Is that margarine?" He replied, "Yes, they did not have any butter." I understood from the conversation between her and her husband that he had brought home the parcel and had offered as an excuse for bringing home margarine that he could not secure butter. I can assure members that the margarine was very cleverly got up.

Hon. J. Cornell: It sounds like a fairy tale!

Hon. W. J. MANN: I do not know whether Mr. Cornell would have been able to discover the difference. Some of the margarine that I have seen is undoubtedly got up with the idea of deceiving people. What the Government should do is to ensure that margarine is given such a distinctive colour as to make it impossible to confuse it with butter.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: You know the Government gave the margarine dealers a quota.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Yes. Yesterday, at one of our stores, I saw margarine marked at 1s. 2d. a lb., which is by no means cheap compared with butter at 1s. 8d. I read recently in a Victorian paper that beef fat to make margarine was procured at a price as low as 1½d. a lb. When I mentioned that fact where I was staying, I was told, "I have seen some of that beef fat and if you saw it you would never look at margarine again. Imported copra is grown by black labour. It is imported duty free, and I understand is purchased at a trifle over 1d. a lb. Admittedly, the beef fat and the copra are subsequently refined. While beef fat and copra may be fit for human consumption, they are not comparable to good butter, and their use should not be encouraged. A quota of copra was agreed to by this Government. Some comment on it was made in this Chamber. I do not think it is to the credit of the Government that the importation of copra should be encouraged.

It is deplorable that such a valuable national asset as the dairying industry should have to fight this form of erosion simply because some Australians wrongly think to save money by purchasing margarine. I propose to quote a few lines to drive home to members the value to Australia of the dairying industry—

The dairying industry makes a generous contribution to the principle of Australian protection. In turn it expects a reasonable measure of protection for itself. That the industry merits that consideration will be obvious from the following factors indicative of its value to the nation:—

1. There is invested in dairy farms, stock and dairy farm equipment a sum of money variously estimated at between £200,000,000 and £300,000,000.
2. There is invested in dairy factory land, buildings and equipment a sum of approximately £6,000,000.
3. These factories pay wages amounting to approximately £1,500,000 per annum.
4. In addition, the dairying industry provides for the maintenance on dairy farms of approximately 500,000 persons.
5. The annual value of the output of butter alone amounted last year to approximately £26,000,000, of which approximately £12,000,000 represented exports.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: Is that in Australian currency?

Hon. W. J. MANN: Yes. I do not think I need go further, but I hope I have made clear to members that the dairying industry is worth encouraging and that the South-West and Bunbury harbour in particular are deserving of further consideration and assistance.

Mention is made in the Speech of a proposed amendment of the Traffic Act. I say without fear of contradiction that there is ample room for all-round improvement in the regulations. Similarly, there is grave necessity for a wider realisation on the part of many motorists, and many members of the public also, of the dangers that accompany present-day forms of transport. It is alarming to find each year the list of fatal accidents and of people injured and maimed showing an increase. During the year ended the 30th June, 1937, no fewer than 1,387 persons were killed as a result of motor accidents in Australia, and 22,940 were injured, many of them to such an extent that they will be useless for anything in

the shape of work for the rest of their lives. In the year ended the 30th June, 1938, the number of people killed was 1,483, an increase of 96 for the year, and the number of people injured increased by 2,157, making the somewhat staggering total of 25,097 injured in motor accidents in one year in Australia. In the latter year, Western Australia tied with Victoria for the unenviable distinction of having the highest average death rate. I hope that the Government, when bringing down the amendment to the Act, will not lose sight of the necessity for establishing motor patrols on country roads. There is a type of road-hog—that is the most charitable way to describe him—frequently met on the main arterial roads who needs prompt and effective attention. This individual defies all the canons of decency, is generally contemptuous of the rights of other people, and often is highly abusive. Those who use country roads know of the type.

Hon. E. H. Angelo: Magistrates are too lenient when those people are caught.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Let us arrange to catch them and then we can see what the magistrates do.

Hon. E. H. Angelo: But many of them have been caught.

Hon. W. J. MANN: This type of individual bestrides the centre of the roadway and calmly disregards all accepted and lawful signals, and any attempt to travel on the correct side of the road is foreign to him.

Hon. A. Thomson: He is the type that needs to be dealt with.

Hon. W. J. MANN: When that type comes to cross-roads, and near to schools, he thinks nothing of dashing past. If anybody gets in his way, well, he regards it as the victim's misfortune. We meet the same individual on our travels by night. He seems to think it beneath his dignity to dim his lights, and he will flash over the crest of a hill, or around a corner, with his lights dazzling along the centre of the road, and only by rapid thought and prompt action and frequently by running into the bush can other motorists escape damage. I would not feel concerned if this class of person endangered only his own life. I have no sympathy at all for him; if he will do those things, he must take what is coming. But I am solicitous for the lives of decent people, who are in the majority. I want the authorities to get hold of such senseless and

flash persons—they are usually people with an exalted opinion of themselves—and terminate their activities by the imposition of exemplary fines, or the cancellation of licenses. If penalties of £100 or imprisonment are justified for a breach of the betting laws, the same at least are more than warranted for breaches of some of our traffic laws, and could well be put into effect. I shall support the Government in any action taken to minimise this trouble.

I wish to make brief reference to a question asked in this House by Mr. Tuckey on Wednesday last. Let me say at the outset I am satisfied that the Honorary Minister, in replying to that question, was misinformed. Mr. Tuckey asked a question regarding the sale by the Government of cattle for which a clean bill of health could not be given. The question read—

Is the Government aware that in October last the Agricultural Bank sold by auction at Sabina Vale a number of dairy cows concerning which it refused a guarantee of freedom from the disease known as contagious abortion?

Possibly the wording of the question was unfortunate; it should have said the sale of cattle "from" instead of "at" Sabina Vale, although that point is being contested. The Minister's informants were either endeavouring to hush up something that occurred or have deliberately misinformed him.

The Honorary Minister interjected.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I attended a meeting of delegates of agricultural societies convened by the Royal Agricultural Society and held in William street, Perth, about three weeks ago. As delegate from the Margaret River Agricultural Society and the Southern Districts Agricultural Society, Busselton, I moved motions dealing with this very matter. The Chief Inspector of Stock and the Superintendent of Dairying were present, and replied to my remarks, and admitted that what I said had been done. I am not going to steal the thunder of the member who asked the question. I understand that Mr. Tuckey proposes to reply fully to this matter, but I wish to say definitely that the Minister was misinformed. I do not consider that any credit was due to the department responsible, and if the officials consider the answer clever, it was a very poor attempt at cleverness.

Hon. A. Thomson: It was not fair to the Minister.

Hon. W. J. MANN: It was not. If the officials desired to keep the matter quiet, they went the wrong way about it, because it is now likely to receive considerable publicity.

There is one other matter to which I desire to refer. Recently we had a report that, as a result of research undertaken by the C.S.I.R., an extension of the flax industry in Australia may be expected in the near future. I have seen something of flax production in New Zealand, and it has always been evident to me that we have in the South-West quite a lot of land that would be admirable for the growing of flax. The Government has instituted a campaign to encourage the establishment of secondary industries. I suggest that it should give serious and immediate attention to the question of flax cultivation, and through its responsible officers get in touch with the Council of Industrial Research to ascertain what has been disclosed by their investigations. If that information proves to be such as we hope, then it should provide another highly valuable industry for Western Australia, an industry for which there is always likely to be a good market. I feel sure that many people would embark on the cultivation of flax. I have heard the matter discussed many times. So far we have always suffered from a lack of experienced growers, and been somewhat in the dark as to the best method of procedure. I do commend this suggestion to the Government. I support the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

HON. H. S. W. PARKER (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.47]: Before addressing myself to the Lieut.-Governor's Speech, I desire to congratulate the Government on having weathered the storm earlier in the year. I also desire to congratulate individual Ministers on their appointment. I sincerely trust the Government will in relation to various matters to which I shall refer do somewhat more during this session than it has done in the past. It is somewhat surprising that the Speech makes no reference whatever to any amendment of the betting or licensing laws. From this fact I am led to infer that the Government is satisfied with those laws. One would naturally assume that if not satisfied with those laws, Ministers would express in the Governor's Speech an intention to amend them. If I am correct in my assumption that Ministers are satisfied with those laws,

I must also assume they will see that those laws are obeyed. If they do not administer the laws as provided by Parliament, then they are not carrying out the traditions of democracy and are not fulfilling their oaths of office, and further are not justified in receiving the salaries which Parliament grants them for the purpose of administering the laws. It is the first duty of a democratic government to administer the laws passed by Parliament. The question arises, are the representatives of the people prepared to alter the gambling laws or the licensing laws? If so, let the necessary Bills be brought down. If those representatives are not prepared to alter the laws, then it is their bounden duty to see that the laws are obeyed. They hold the reins of office. The people have elected them by a majority, and it is for them to decide. They have the alternative of either amending the laws or of carrying them out, having the necessary numbers.

It is quite obvious that the licensing laws as at present existing are obsolete. It is absurd that the miner on the goldfields coming off shift is not allowed to have a drink. I feel sure every member, other than members who are bound up with the views of prohibition, will agree that the licensing laws require bringing up to date by drastic amendment. I certainly do not believe in prohibition. I do believe in greater freedom as regards liquor, but I also believe in maintaining the law, whatever it may be for the time being.

It is quite obvious that the gambling laws require immediate attention. We know that if such laws are only partly enforced, Ministers and their officers have only themselves to blame if remarks of a personal nature are hurled against them. We all know that there are starting price betting shops that are never raided and never charged, though carrying on quite openly. It has been expressed somewhat openly in the streets by various people, irresponsible and responsible, that there are theories and reasons why such a state of affairs prevails. I am prepared to support any measure which, in my opinion, is for the general welfare of the people, whether for the moment it be popular or unpopular. The only reason why I mention that is that possibly I may give the Government a little encouragement, seeing that it will not face the people for three years

whereas I shall face my electors during the next 12 months. I trust Ministers will take it from me that I am sincere in my desire to have the law either amended or enforced, and that I shall do my utmost to assist them in either direction. However, it must be one way or the other.

Various other matters of urgency are also omitted from the Governor's Speech. One is a matter which was very urgent during the last Parliament—amendment of the Constitution Act. If only the amendment recommended by this Chamber some time ago had been adopted, various occurrences since then would have been obviated. It is absurd that a person can seek election while not qualified to sit in Parliament. We had an instance of that some time ago, when a gentleman who is a bankrupt stood and was elected. He could not sit. Probably instances under other subsections of the disqualifying section will arise from time to time, and disqualified persons will stand for election and be unable to take their seats in Parliament after the country has been put to the expense of their election.

Yet another matter of urgency is amendment of the Firearms and Guns Act. That measure has become a farce. It is administered in an extraordinarily strict manner through the regulations. If one wishes to buy an ordinary .22 rifle one has first of all to secure a permit from the nearest police station to one's residence. Then one goes along and selects the gun one wants to buy, or else it is that one has to select the gun first and then obtain the permit to buy it. Incidentally, the permit to buy the gun is good for only 24 hours. The same thing applies to ammunition. People coming off mail steamers that pass through Fremantle are often desirous to buy ammunition. As is well known, clay pigeon shooting is a shipboard sport. However, a mailboat passenger wanting to buy ammunition in Western Australia cannot do so, because he has first to obtain from the nearest police station to his residence a certificate that he is a fit and proper person to be permitted to buy ammunition. Of course no police constable will give such a certificate to a mailboat passenger, who is not known to him. The only means by which such a person can obtain ammunition is for the dealer to commit a breach of the law. Suppose a man from the country go-

ing along the street here takes a fancy to a gun in a gunsmith's shop. He cannot buy that gun, because he has first to get a permit from the policeman in the place where he resides—say Meekatharra. Further, he cannot buy a rifle in Perth, because the permit under the regulations is good for only 24 hours. The farcical aspect is that any resident of Western Australia can write for a gun to Adelaide or elsewhere in the Eastern States and get any sort of firearm he likes and have it sent here. The police have then to find him with the firearm in his possession. These are things which, though true, can hardly be given credence. A man with a gun goes to register, but the gun is confiscated and is not registered. In one instance a man who had a .22 rifle in his camp went into hospital, and upon his return the rifle was gone. He subsequently recovered his rifle at Fremantle; but the police would not give him a license and would not register the gun because, they said, they did not know what had been done with it in the meantime. I took the matter up, and the man got a license. I suggest that the whole subject is one for Commonwealth legislation. Further, I consider that the only firearm that should be registered, and strictly registered, is a revolver. Anybody can join the militia, get a rifle and have it stolen from his home. The State Act should be entirely discarded, and the matter dealt with by the Federal Parliament. The present position is utterly absurd.

This Chamber from time to times comes in for a good deal of abuse, especially during elections. I wish to point out to those who criticise the Legislative Council that the present Government is in power because all the legislation which has been passed and for which the Government has claimed credit received the consent of the Council. If this Chamber had allowed a good many measures brought before it to go through, the result of the recent general election, I feel quite sure, would have been entirely and absolutely different. It will be remembered that last session a Bill was introduced to further the establishment of secondary industries. This Chamber pointed out that the Bill was entirely unnecessary, and that the only result of passing it would be to create a burden on the people by providing for a large committee, the members of which were to be paid. It was

pointed out here that the Government could do all it desired without any Act, and that is how the Government is doing it. The Minister claims great credit for that fact; but I think he ought to give credit where credit is due, and let the people know that it was this Chamber that pointed out how he could do what is being done. The project is highly necessary, and I am indeed pleased to see the effort made by the present Government to foster secondary industries. I fear, however, that the Government is somewhat hamstrung in this respect. Here we have one highly important industry, the type of secondary industry that we want, closed down, with the result that we let in products for which we have to send money to the Eastern States. Yet nothing has been done publicly. However, I have a vivid recollection of some unfortunate small men who were making lime and did not comply with an arbitration award. Thereupon the industrial inspector, a Government officer, took action against those small men under every possible provision of the award that had been broken. I fail to see why that same Government inspector cannot now do his duty and bring matters to a head. I do not advocate the bringing of complaints before the courts for every wrongdoing, but I do consider that if the Government took a solid stand in this matter it would inspire a vast deal of confidence in those people who may be contemplating the starting of industries in Western Australia. Unless the Government stands firm, I cannot see that there is any hope for an increase in our secondary industries in Western Australia. Furthermore, before we can induce people to come to Western Australia to establish such industries, it is essential that we shall put our own house in order. I would instance the Workers' Compensation Act. I have always believed in that Act, but I also believe that the workers do not receive benefits to the fullest extent for injuries they sustain. Until that Act is overhauled the workers will not derive from its provisions the benefits to which they are entitled, while the employers will continue to pay far more for insurance purposes than should be necessary. If the Act were entirely overhauled, benefits would be provided where they were due and thus save expense to industry.

To-day the most burning question before the public has relation to the wheatgrowing industry, which we know is the staple industry of Western Australia, but I cannot see how we can ever expect to improve matters merely by taking money out of the pockets of one section of the people in order to pay another. No system of subsidies will obviate the existing evil. Such a system would be merely playing with the problem. We cannot too often emphasise that the people in the cities and all the workers live on the farmers. If the State receives no wheat cheque from overseas, there is no money with which the employers can pay their workers, nor can there be any industries in which employees can be assured of work. All means of financing such undertakings are derived from wheat farming and other forms of primary production. If the wheat cheque is short, then money in the city is short; when money is short in the city, funds for secondary industries are correspondingly difficult to find.

Hon. J. Cornell: Can you tell us why it is that farmers can get motor trucks and motor cars when they cannot buy ploughs?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I am not a wizard. All I know is that if we do not derive any money from our primary production, unemployment must be created. I cannot for one moment agree that our wheatgrowing industry can be maintained by means of a subsidy, for I regard that as a wrong basis upon which to approach the problem. On the other hand, I believe we must have free trade as between the nations, and get them to take our wheat. The only means by which we can achieve that objective is to take the goods produced by other nations. We shall not really reduce our standard of living by so doing, for we shall be able to procure goods more cheaply than it will cost us to produce similar articles. No doubt wages and salaries may be reduced in terms of pounds, shillings and pence, but, on the other hand, we shall be able to purchase more for the money we have. Certainly we shall be able to purchase more commodities by the expenditure of a pound than is possible under existing conditions. At the same time we shall be able to sell our wheat. That seems to me one way in which the problem may be handled. I agree that it is an international problem, but nevertheless the State can do much to force the position. Western Australia is a wheat-

producing State, and should be able to take some action.

Hon. L. Craig: What would you do in the meantime?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: In the meantime it may be essential to render assistance to the wheatgrowers by way of subsidy, but we must appreciate the fact that every individual in the city is very largely dependent upon the production of wheat and its disposal overseas.

Hon. H. V. Piessé: And on the production of wool?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Yes, together with every other form of primary produce. Turning now to other questions, the time is long overdue for a redistribution of seats in this Chamber. My colleagues and I represent 30,000 electors in the Metropolitan-Suburban Province, and without the slightest difficulty another 10,000 persons could be put on the roll for that province. I do not regard it as fair that members for the Metropolitan-Suburban Province should be required to look after the interests of one-fourth of the total number of electors on the Legislative Council rolls, nor do I consider it fair that so many electors should have only three members to represent them. Doubtless in some quarters any disturbing of the existing arrangements would be regarded as distressing. On the other hand, I think quite an appreciable proportion of the 30,000 electors could be set aside for someone else to look after.

Hon. J. Cornell: That would be a calamity.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: What is the area of your province?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The members for the Metropolitan-Suburban Province do not represent sand but brains.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: That is no answer.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I have never worried about areas, but about people; and the number of people in my province is increasing rapidly.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: If you represented a goldfields province you would worry about areas.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Perhaps so. I claim that Metropolitan-Suburban members represent far too many electors under existing conditions, and that the situation is not fair either to the electors or to the members representing the province.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 15th August, 1939.

Hon. H. Tuckey: Would you increase the number of members of this House?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: No, I think the present number is quite sufficient, but I would alter the distribution.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Will you agree that the existing number of members of this Chamber is too great?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: No, that is quite another matter. Dealing now with the Licensing Court, I would remind the House that originally that tribunal was established for the purpose of reducing the number of licenses in existence. The court fulfilled that objective long ago, and in my opinion a great saving of money could be effected by entirely abolishing the Licensing Court and allowing the stipendiary magistracy to deal with matters that now go before that court. I want it to be understood that in making these references I am not reflecting upon the personnel of the court but am merely discussing the principle involved. Our stipendiary magistracy is on a very solid basis and throughout the magisterial districts the officials I have in mind are quite capable of carrying out the functions now fulfilled by members of the Licensing Court. I sincerely trust our laws will be enforced, and I will do all in my power to improve conditions generally. This I can do because, as was stated in public quite recently, I am entirely free and untrammelled by any party considerations in or outside this Chamber. I have much pleasure in supporting the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

On motion by Hon. H. V. Piesse, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.9 p.m.

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

ELECTORAL—SWEARING-IN OF MEMBER.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am prepared to swear in the member for Nelson.

Mr. J. H. Smith took and subscribed the oath and signed the roll.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fifth Day.

Debate resumed from the 10th August.

MR. W. HEGNEY (Pilbara) [4.38]: I do not think I can preface my remarks in a more appropriate way than by supplementing the comments of the Leader of the National Party upon the previous member for Pilbara. I ascertained that he was a very popular member of this Chamber; I also found that he was equally popular in his electorate. Mr. Welsh is a man of magnetic personality and is 100 per cent. Australian. While the members on this side of the House will no doubt be pleased politically that he did not win the last election, I can quite appreciate the high esteem in which every member of this Chamber held Mr. Welsh. You, Mr. Speaker, and the Chairman of Committees, have my sincerest congratulations upon your election to the responsible positions you hold. You both have had wide Parliamentary experience, and I feel sure that you will discharge the duties of your respective offices to the satisfaction of members. The two new Ministers also have my best wishes. The member for Kimberley is thoroughly acquainted with the North-West and is fully seized of the spirit dominating the people there. I have no doubt he will make an ideal Minister for the North-West, as did his predecessor.