

State would have been 3s. 6d. per ton, or £10,000 annually.

Mr. Cross: Why did not the superphosphate firms change over?

Mr. HILL: Some years ago those companies were willing to put up a plant at Albany provided a site were made available on the waterfront, but the Government of the day gave no encouragement to the project. The big loser through the absence of super works at Albany is the Railway Department, and I place the loss during 1938-39 at £30,000. We shipped 500,000 cases of fruit with the existing facilities. Had the railway been completed to Bridgetown, probably 800,000 cases of fruit could have been despatched from Albany. We also shipped about 30,000 lambs. In recent weeks much was said about the Albany Woollen Mills and the proposal to transfer the works to Fremantle. We have to get down to tints and we asked why it would be of advantage if the mills operated at Fremantle instead of at Albany. The answer was that it was due to the fact that Fremantle as a port had been developed while the Albany harbour had been neglected. Last year the railage of goods to and from Fremantle cost the mills £1,000, and that occasioned the expenditure of £400 extra for power because the oil requisite for the power had to be hauled 340 miles.

In conclusion I merely desire to say that we have every reason to be proud of the fact that we belong to the British Empire. We have every reason to be proud of the part the Commonwealth of Australia has played in the present war and in that respect no State has done more than has Western Australia. Our task is to govern and develop this great State of ours. Today our young men are fighting and, in too many instances, dying for us so that we may retain the freedom we enjoy and of which we are so proud. I make no apology for dealing with matters affecting the southern end of Western Australia but what I do suggest is that we should cease being a Swan River Parliament and should be a Western Australian Parliament, one that would seek in every way to develop each part of the State and accord every part equal consideration, such as we in our turn would desire to receive from the Commonwealth. Our aim must be a happy and prosperous State as a whole—prosperous in peacetime and safe during war.

On motion by Mr. Cross, debate adjourned.

### ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

**THE PREMIER:** I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 4.30 p.m. on Tuesday, the 22nd August.

**MR. THORN (Toodyay):** In the absence of the Leader of the Opposition, I have to inform the House that we raise no objection to the proposal of the Premier. We fully realise that very important matters are facing the State for decision, and we shall go our different ways in supporting our particular views. Bearing that in mind, we have no objection to the adjournment.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 6.4 p.m.*

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## Legislative Council.

*Tuesday, 22nd August, 1944.*

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

### CHAIRMEN (TEMPORARY) OF COMMITTEES.

The PRESIDENT: I have to announce that I have appointed as temporary Chairmen of Committees for the current session the following members:—Hon. V. Hamersley, Hon. G. Fraser and Hon. H. Seddon.

### LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. A. Thomson, leave of absence for six consecutive sittings granted to Hon. H. V. Piesse (South-East) on the ground of ill-health.

### MOTION—FREMANTLE HARBOUR TRUST ACT.

*To Disallow Bagged-Wheat Charges Regulation.*

**HON. C. F. BAXTER (East)** [4.34]: I move—

That new regulation No. 148 made under the Fremantle Harbour Trust Act, 1902, as published in the "Government Gazette" of the

24th December, 1943, and laid on the Table of the House on the 1st August, 1944, be and is hereby disallowed.

On reading my motion members will realise that this matter was the subject of a similar motion and debate in this House on the 28th September last. The debate originated from amendments to a Fremantle Harbour Trust regulation, which was published in the "Government Gazette" on the 4th June, 1943, and the result was that the House carried the motion which disallowed the regulation. Another regulation to replace the one disallowed was published in the "Government Gazette" on the 24th December, 1944. An analysis of the new regulation shows that it has almost the same effect, as the rates are only slightly below those in the regulation disallowed last year and are still far in excess of the original rates. This action is tantamount to a complete disregard of the wishes of Parliament so clearly defined when the first amended regulation was disallowed. As a guide to members I will quote the original rates, together with those disallowed and the newly amended rates which form the subject of this motion—

	Old Rate.	Rate Disallowed.	New Rate.
Delivering from stack to vessel for loading by means of—			
(1) Gantry loaders	2-275d.	4-250d.	4-038d.
(2) Vessel's own gear or crane	2-275d.	4-500d.	4-275d.

The reduction in each instance is 5 per cent.

Delivering to the platform of road vehicles, including the customary single bag weighing, or loading into, and stowing railway wagons without weighing	1-75d.	2-65d.	2-65d.
Restacking or rehandling, for each service	1-0d.	1-0d.	1-0d.
Handling to and from scales for single bag weighing during the course of shipment (including the weighing of the bags, together with a list of weights but not a receipt for weight)	1-0d.	1-0d.	1-0d.

In each of those three instances there was no alteration.

Discharging direct from railway wagons and—			
(1) Loading on to gantry loaders	0-25d.	1-25d.	1-188d.
(2) Slinging for vessel's own gear or crane	75d.	1-5d.	1-425d.

In each of those two instances there is a decrease of 5 per cent. Members will appreciate, however, that the rates in the new regulation are almost the same as those disallowed by this House, the reductions being very small. It will be seen that the

first amendments to the rates—those disallowed on the 28th September last—involved an increase of 87 to 100 per cent., and that the new rates now under discussion are in some instances the same as those disallowed and in others have been decreased by but five per cent. Only a very short space of time elapsed between the disallowance of the regulations at the end of September, 1943, and the gazettal of the regulations referred to in my motion. Evidently the officials were very quick on the job and were careful to fix the charges on the same basis as those disallowed. I understand that in the first instance the matter was referred to the Prices Commissioner, who said—

It was one that should be settled between the Fremantle Harbour Trust and the Australian Wheat Board.

As the result of the increase the Australian Wheat Board is put to extra expense and the money must directly or indirectly come from the price paid for the wheat and thus affect the wheatgrower. The financial position of the Fremantle Harbour Trust shows that its revenue exceeds its expenditure by a very substantial amount. The 1944 returns of the Fremantle Harbour Trust are not as yet available and consequently it is necessary to quote the figures as at the 30th June, 1943, as contained in the last return. After meeting operating costs, etc., the surplus amounted to £262,581, a very handsome profit, but necessarily interest and sinking fund must be provided from this amount. Interest amounted to £144,800 and sinking fund to £23,120, a total of £167,920, leaving a surplus of £94,661. This shows how vigilant the House must be to prevent a public utility from being used as a profit making concern; or, put in clearer terms, to prevent the formation of another taxing machine, one which will add further to the burdens of an already over-loaded industry.

It must be admitted that the quantity of wheat in sacks will increase owing to war conditions. This wartime increase in bag handling is brought about by part-cargoes and damage to harbour installations, which must occur as the Allied Armies liberate further countries from the enemy's grasp, because the liberated people must be fed. The cost of bagging is no small item, yet the Fremantle Harbour Trust seeks to gain extra revenue by increasing the handling charges. The Trust

seems to overlook the fact that heavy harbour dues are payable on the shipment of wheat and that to meet such charges these must be added to the freight. The farmer therefore is ultimately called upon to bear such additional charges. Is it not enough that the wheatgrower will have to bear the extra cost of the additional cornsacks that will be required? Why should a concern like the Fremantle Harbour Trust, with its handsome surplus, impose additional costs? All this suggests that the Harbour Trust was quite content with the charges for handling bagged wheat until it appeared that there would be a substantial increase in the export of such wheat.

The Trust is taking advantage of an industry which, I regret to state, is, instead of being united like other movements—the Labour movement, for instance—split into two sections which are not working in unison. Generally, when increases in costs are imposed on other industries the latter are in a position to pass on the extra charge by increasing prices, but wheat is sold at world parity and the farmer cannot possibly pass on increased costs. The wheat industry is of extreme importance to the country and every care should be taken to protect it and make it attractive. Instead, charges on it have been increasing tremendously year by year, and more especially during the present war. The farmers find these increases exceedingly burdensome at the present time and I venture the opinion that when the war ends there will be an alteration in that respect. There must be, if we are to continue wheat-growing in this State.

Hon. A. Thomson: It costs more to grow wheat.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Yes, very much more. These charges for handling bagged wheat should be reconsidered in the light of the fact that the Fremantle Harbour Trust had a surplus of over £94,000 which it handed over to the Government, who probably paid it into Consolidated Revenue. Notwithstanding that the price for wheat has appreciated to a great extent, the farmers are not reaping the benefit of such increase. Owing to Federal policy, the Australian Wheat Board is selling wheat to various concerns much under the price received on the sales of wheat. Wheat for flour is 4s. per bushel, or 5s. 2d. per bushel when the flour tax is added. From

March last wheat has been selling for 5s. 11d. to 7s. 6d. per bushel, and it has been selling in considerable quantities.

At present the community is in need of cheap food. Yet we find that wheat for breakfast foods is sold at 4s. a bushel by the farmer, but after it has been processed it is sold at £4 10s. That seems to be a very big margin for preparing the food, packing it, supplying cartons and distributing it. There is a long difference between 4s. a bushel and £4 10s. a bushel. Someone must be getting a wonderful rake-off. Wheat for stock is sold at 4s. per bushel. The farmer pays 3s. 6d. per bushel: the Commonwealth Government makes him this small concession of 6d. per bushel. When the Australian Wheat Board gets 4s. a bushel and the farm buyer pays only 3s. 6d., the 6d. is made up. Then there is the big sale of wheat at much lower prices to Great Britain and to New Zealand. It is under the same agreement and on the same basis as for Canada and because of the Government policy the wheatgrower must pay for that cheap wheat.

Take the softgoods tradesman. If a merchant has 10,000 yards of any material, and the ceiling price is 6d. per yard, he must sell at that price, but if the costs increase, together with freight, insurance, etc., so that the material runs out at 9d. per yard, the difference of 3d., because of the Commonwealth Government's policy, is paid to the softgoods dealer. Why should he have that privilege and not the wheatgrower? If the wheatgrower were making a profit at 4s., it would not be so bad, but he is not, and has not done so for several years past. That is why many hundreds of acres are thrown out of use for wheatgrowing. The low price for wheat is one of the main reasons for the industry being killed. Let us take three items to show the loss. For flour for home consumption, 30,000,000 bushels of wheat are required per annum. Let us assess the value of wheat at an average of 6s. 8d. a bushel over the past 12 months which, I think, is quite reasonable.

The Chief Secretary: What grounds have you to support that price?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I am dealing with the present year. The fact is that sales have not been made at lower than 5s. 11d., and they have been up to 7s. 6d. At that price the quantities were larger than at the lower price. That is the basis for the amount of

6s. 8d., and I think it is reasonable. That shows a loss of 1s. 6d. a bushel, which, on 30,000,000 bushels, amounts to £2,250,000. The flour tax on the 30,000,000 bushels for flour for home consumption is to give the people cheap bread, and the farmer is responsible for that because of Government policy.

Cheap food for the people is probably a good idea, but, if it is Government policy, then the cost should be spread over the nation; everyone should pay his share through taxation and not only the people who grow the commodity. If we take the 30,000,000 bushels for stock at 4s., we find that the farmer is short-paid by 2s. 8d., and that represents another £4,000,000. A further quantity of 2,000,000 bushels is utilised in connection with breakfast foods and malting. That represents an amount of £266,666 short-paid, or a total of £6,500,000 without considering all the other avenues through which cheap wheat is being disposed. Power alcohol is being made throughout Australia, and there are many other avenues through which wheat is utilised. The farmer should not be called upon to sell cheap wheat to give cheap food to the people unless he is recompensed, as anyone in any other industry should be. These people have to live and make the industry pay.

Let members consider the harvest award. A very high increase in wages has been provided for the handling of wheat, but for nothing else. Many farmers, unfortunately, paid out for the whole harvest. I admit that it is very difficult to avoid that. But the Government made that award on the basis of wheat only, and that is what the wages are paid for. With regard to oats, barley, etc., it is a matter of private treaty between the employer and the employee, but it is a very difficult matter, after putting a man on to harvesting wheat, to get him to accept a smaller wage to harvest other produce, where no subsidy is allowed.

The Commonwealth Government has provided 1½d. per bushel to meet that increased wage. Mr. Scully said that the farmers received £500,000. They were paid nothing of the sort. That statement was made purely because of the Referendum. They had to make up the increased wages. That was to meet the increased wages, but what is not taken into consideration is this fact, that in the very near future there will

not be money available with which to provide all these subsidies. Let us see who will be the first to suffer when the subsidy for the higher wages for harvesting wheat disappears. What will be the position? There will be no reduction in wages.

Hon. A. Thomson: You are not advocating that.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: That is so. I am advocating some protection for the farmers so that they can pay the wages. How can they pay the wages with all these incursions into the returns from wheat? There are increased charges for handling, and everything else. As far as wages are concerned, I say that it is necessary for any country to provide wages to its people so that they can live in such a degree of comfort that they can have comfortable homes, rear and clothe their families well, save a little for a rainy day and enjoy their life. If a country cannot do that, then God help the country! I can have no appreciation for such a country and no one else could. Wages are a most important consideration in any country. These vexatious charges are not very heavy, but they are all creeping in and they should not be allowed to do so.

By a very substantial majority this House rejected these charges in September last. In December, instead of reducing the charges, the will of the House was disregarded, and an alteration providing a reduction of 5 per cent. on four of the charges was brought about. This meant practically nothing in round figures, especially when the handling charges were doubled. I do hope that the House will be consistent and fair to the producers in considering their position. The Fremantle Harbour Trust must see that it imposes rates commensurate with the old charges and not, after imposing a set of rates which was subsequently disallowed, bring forward a small variation only sufficient to say, "We have amended the rates." Surely this House will not agree to that! Surely no member who supported the disallowance of the regulation in September last will agree to what the Harbour Trust has now put forward! I hope that the House will support the motion and disallow the regulation. The Fremantle Harbour Trust should draft a new regulation on a more reasonable basis. Anything reasonable will not be objected to. I strongly object to the present increase.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

*Sixth Day.*

Debate resumed from the 9th August.

**HON. A. THOMSON** (South-East) [5.0]: I should like to say how pleased we are to enjoy the happy position in which we find ourselves in connection with the war, so very much better than it was in 1943. The success of our Allies against those who have endeavoured to dominate and enslave the world has also been overwhelming. A great deal has been heard about planning for the future. We must all pay a tribute to the organising ability of those who have planned the defeat of our enemies in France, Africa and Italy. I trust that we as a people will prove worthy of the great sacrifices that have been made by so many men who have laid down their lives so that we may return to that freedom for which our forefathers fought and died and endeavoured to preserve for us. All looks well for our cause.

Let us not forget the agony and the sacrifices of those people in Great Britain when they held on so grimly, although it looked as if the Huns had the Empire crushed and were about to trample it under foot. Let us not forget, too, the many Australians who have played so important a part in securing that freedom which we in Australia enjoy, and let us also offer our humble thanks to our American Allies for their help and assistance. I should like to congratulate my fellow members who faced the election last April. It is indeed gratifying that all ten members were returned. This shows clearly that the electors as a whole are satisfied with the efforts of this House.

The tumult and the shouting associated with the Referendum have ceased, and the majority of the people have in their wisdom arrived at what I consider to be a sound and just decision. We can recall the time that has been wasted by responsible and irresponsible people over the air, in the Press, and at meetings, and can realise that all this represented an unwarranted expenditure of public as well as private money. I hope that for the future stability of Australia that sort of thing will not be repeated for many years. During the campaign this House came in

for a great deal of unjust and unwarranted criticism. I heard speakers at public meetings declare that the Legislative Council was a menace to democracy. Judging by the voices of the people as a whole, I think the action that this House took when we were endeavouring to protect the sovereign rights of Western Australia was fully justified. The strong voice of the people clearly demonstrated that the Legislative Council of Western Australia and of Tasmania took the right stand.

We hear it said that there is no necessity for the Legislative Council and that there has been shown to be no necessity for the re-establishment of the Legislative Council in Queensland. The vote has clearly demonstrated that the action taken by this House in agreeing to give the Commonwealth Government certain powers to deal with the rehabilitation of our soldiers as well as employment and unemployment, was rightly taken, and we have every reason to be proud of that action. Many of those who voted "Yes" in Western Australia should feel gratified that this House, instead of defeating the powers as a whole, amended them, so that the Commonwealth Government should be possessed of additional powers governing the rehabilitation of our soldiers and the employment of those who are unfortunate enough to need it. I read with a good deal of interest the report of a statement made by the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Works, when dealing with the Referendum. He stated—

From a purely selfish viewpoint the people of Western Australia more than of any other State might have been justified in voting "No." It was to their great credit that they have taken the broad view by voting "Yes."

That is the Minister's own opinion and I do not propose to deal with it. I am, however, justified in drawing attention to the concluding remarks of the Minister when he said—

The returning servicemen and the young people of Australia will probably suffer most by the defeat of the Referendum. I earnestly hope the people of Australia will not, in the post-war years, have cause desperately to regret their decision on the Referendum.

One wonders whether the Minister for Works was daring to suggest that there was a possibility of our returning to power men who would not do justice to this State. I would be loth to think that the Commonwealth Government or the State Government would act in such an unfair manner. We know

that history repeats itself. Many arguments have been submitted as to why the Commonwealth Government required additional powers. I have here a copy of a report prepared by the Development and Migration Commission and printed in 1928. For a period we had as a member of this House, Sir Charles Nathan, Chairman of that Commission, which was appointed to consider and carefully examine the various claims submitted by Governments to the Commonwealth for the development of the States and for the provision of employment for those who sought it. I wish to quote a few extracts from page 6 of the report. These appear over the signatures of Mr. H. W. Gepp, who, we all agree, is a man who played an important part in the development of industry in Australia, Mr. W. P. Devereux, Mr. J. Gunn, representing Labour, and Mr. E. J. Mulvany. The extract is as follows:—

The effective co-ordination between departments in each State, as well as between State and State, between Commonwealth and State, and between Governments and leaders of industry, will give the country the full benefit of the considerable abilities available.

Each of the State Government Departments exercises a wide responsibility towards the country than the administration and operation of its own special section. Some of them have given marked assistance—additional to their specialised services—to wide sections of the community. So all of them, by consultation, by enthusiastic co-operation, and by enlisting the assistance of leaders of thought and action, can become active agents in promoting the advancement of their States, and of the Commonwealth as a whole. It is essential to the complete success of such a movement that it should be co-ordinated in a way which will make the efforts of the various sections fully effective, and which will ensure the organisation of the brain power of the nation so that the attainment of a full measure of prosperity and security will be assured to our people.

One of the results of such a system of stimulating Australia's progress would be that the movement would be well balanced; secondary and primary industries, housing and social services would all receive their due meed of attention and stimulus. Industry would be protected with due regard to production, costs, markets, availability of raw material, and the prospects for expansion in Australia indicated by improvements in world trade and production.

In his speech this afternoon, Mr. Baxter quoted charges which the Government were seeking to impose upon wheatgrowers by way of additional revenue for the Fremantle Harbour Trust. I have a particular reason for referring to the report from

which I have just quoted. Ever since the war started members of this House, all those who are not members of the Labour Party, have freely and voluntarily offered their services to the Government and the community. I regret that in Commonwealth circles there has unfortunately been a determination to confine all appointments as far as possible to those of a particular political party. That is no way to win the war. We are making the progress we are simply because we have brought together all sections of thought to bear upon it.

If we are to make a success of the rehabilitation of our soldiers—and I believe we can—as well as of the difficulties of employment and unemployment, and if we sincerely desire to see our industries prosper and develop, we must realise that this can only be brought about by co-ordination and the co-operation of all sections of political thought and by keeping these matters apart altogether from party interests. I am sure that in Western Australia, and also in Australia as a whole, there are many men and women who regret deeply that the recent Referendum was made a political party issue. The result was to create schisms between many sections of the community, and even to create acute differences of opinion in homes, which should never have been the case. The people in their wisdom, therefore, have decided the question wisely. This House and another Chamber have granted to the Commonwealth Government all the powers needed to enable that Government, in collaboration with the State Governments, to carry on upon a well-balanced basis of organisation. There are some other passages which I should like to quote from the report of the Development and Migration Commission. On page 7 it states—

The growing intensity of competition throughout the world, following upon the increased activation of the application of science to industry during and after the war, has brought Australia rapidly to realise the necessity for applying existing knowledge to all its industries and to follow the lead of older countries in adopting an intensive study for improved methods whereby production can be increased, quality can be improved and costs reduced.

If the Government of Australia and the Western Australian Government will attack problems not with the idea of socialising industry, but with the idea of extending private enterprise as much as possible, there will, I think, be no need for the Govern-

ment, until after the lapse of some time, launching many of the works which the State Premiers are discussing with the Prime Minister. If private enterprise is allowed a reasonably free hand, such as will not allow the public to be exploited, we shall be able to carry on for a number of years. Therefore it would be wise for the Commonwealth and State Governments to hold back for as long as possible many of the national works which they now have ready and earmarked. Then, when the depression of which during the last few months we have heard so much sets in—I trust such will not prove to be the case—the Commonwealth and State Government should be able to tide Australia over the period of difficulty. May I quote further from page 7 of the report—

The unanimous support given by Australians to the steps taken within the past few years at considerable expense, to provide continuous research by scientists into our various problems concerning quality and production, is most encouraging for the future of the nation. All political parties and all sections of the community have combined to make this work non-political and non-party.

If the people of Australia work together, and not from a purely selfish party standpoint, there is nothing that we shall not be able to accomplish. Now I quote from page 9, on the subject of annual increase in population—

Obviously the first duty of the country is to find satisfactory and profitable employment for its own people. Again, new capital is required to place every new breadwinner in employment. It is difficult to calculate with exactitude, in the absence of much essential data, the sum of new capital annually required to place in employment in Australia the youths and the percentage of the females who are arriving at working age each year representing the natural increase in population.

We have heard that the Commonwealth Government intends to prevent as far as possible the issue of new capital ventures, unless such ventures be reasonable and right. Thus a certain amount of control will be required. However, if employment is to be provided for an increased population, we must do everything in our power to establish new industries and encourage the spending of money by them. For the sake of illustration, let me take our goldfields. Surely it was not Western Australian money, or for that matter Australian money, that actually developed our big mines. It was foreign capital. I want to see that foreign

capital come here, even if it makes a small profit by doing so, because it provides opportunities for employing the people of our State.

On page 19 of the report, reference is made to the goldmining industry. I was rather surprised at that, though I take no exception to it in view of the treatment meted out to our goldfields by the Commonwealth Government. In view of that treatment I am somewhat surprised at the wholehearted support accorded to the Commonwealth proposal. If there was one Western Australian industry which received a severe set-back from the Commonwealth Government, it was goldmining. Leaving aside all the stuff that has been talked about the need for organisation and co-operation, I say that if the Commonwealth Government had consulted this report from which I have been quoting, it would have had a basis for 90 per cent. of all the reconstruction required. The Bruce-Page Government was in power when this report was presented. Let me say that in my criticisms I am not dealing with any particular Commonwealth Government, but with the Commonwealth Governments as a whole. In referring to the Referendum, I must, however, make references to the Government that introduced it. I quote further from page 19 of the report—

The Commission point out that because of the static price of gold, goldmining is affected by a rise in the cost of production in a manner substantially different from an industry which can readjust itself to meet economic movements by passing on increases in costs to the consumers of its products and by this means maintain a fairly constant margin of profit. The gold industry obviously cannot do this and therefore any change in the production costs of gold directly affects this margin of profit. Further, in Australia the industry is entirely non-compensated in its relation to the tariff. In other words, any charge which may fall upon the industry by reason of the protective policy of the Commonwealth can have but one effect—to raise the cost of production of gold.

The goldmining industry has to a great extent been compelled to bear increased costs by reason of high tariffs imposed as the policy of Australia, and the primary producers of Australia are in the same position. They have to accept world's parity for their products. That has been the crucible in which Australian commodities have been sold oversea, and also for home consumption, though it is true that primary producers have received through the flour

tax some small benefit on home consumption. But I wish to emphasise the point that the primary producers have to bear the burden of the tariff; they cannot pass it on. Mr. Baxter has pointed out that, on the lines of the aid granted to primary producers through the flour tax, the Commonwealth Government today is paying 3d. per yard subsidy on clothing materials. There is just one other quotation I desire to make from page 22, dealing with unemployment and business stability in Australia—

Upon a reference from the Commonwealth Government, the Commission conducted an investigation into the problem of unemployment in Australia. In its report submitted to the Government in June, 1928, the Commission quoted relative statistics, examined causes and reputed causes of unemployment, discussed remedies and preventive measures, and made recommendations as to the action which might be expected to reduce the severity of unemployment and promote greater business stability in the Commonwealth.

The object of the report was to formulate a policy to direct the attack upon this problem. The more important recommendations related to the institution of research by the Commonwealth into business conditions, with a view to the study of causes and effects of periodical depressions, the stabilisation of exchange; the co-operation of industry in efforts to reduce the incidence and severity of seasonal unemployment and to promote business stability; the regulation of expenditure on public works by planning programmes ahead over terms of years; and the improvement of the systems of employment bureaux in the several States, for the purpose of increasing the mobility of labour and more accurately recording employment statistics and the incidence of unemployment.

The Commonwealth Government has already announced its intention of providing facilities for research into business conditions; the Commonwealth Bank has indicated that the measures adopted by it for the regulation of foreign exchanges are in general accord with the proposals contained in the Commission's report, and it is understood that the Federal Loan Council is considering the question of regulating expenditure on public works over long periods. If it is possible for the several States to take the steps recommended for the improvement of employment bureaux and the extension of their functions, and to arrange with the representatives of industry for the establishment of Industrial Stability Committees, the Commission feels that very satisfactory machinery would then be available for the more accurate determination of the extent and causes of unemployment, and for the speedy adoption of measures designed to result in greater stability and a reduction of fluctuations in employment.

I have quoted the report freely to show that if mistakes were made in the rehabi-

litation of our industries and in the providing of employment, Governments have had the benefit of the researches of this Commission. I hope that now the Referendum appears to be defeated, there will be whole-hearted co-operation between the Commonwealth and State Governments for the post-war period of reconstruction. Reconstruction is one of the problems to be faced. Now I wish to draw the attention of the Government of this State to a solution of that problem. Under the heading of "Trade Training" the following telegram from Adelaide, dated the 17th July, appeared in "The West Australian"—

The Amalgamated Engineering Union, one of the strongest and most influential unions in the metal trades group, has declared a policy of opposition to the establishment of any post-war scheme for the training of former servicemen as engineering tradesmen. This decision was reached at a Federal conference of organisers held in Sydney, the reason given for the stand being that the engineering trade was already heavily "diluted."

The S.A. secretary of the A.E.U., who represented this State at the conference, said today that it had been decided to co-operate in every way possible in the absorption of engineering tradesmen and apprentices from the services after the war. It was felt, however, that so many dilutees had been brought into the industry that it would be dangerous if their numbers were still further increased by training schemes for service personnel who had no previous experience in the engineering trade. The union had also decided to assist the Government to facilitate the transfer of dilutee tradesmen who wanted to return to their pre-war jobs outside the engineering trade.

What experience and opportunities have thousands of our young men had who were practically taken from school and drafted into the Army where they have served for four years? Is it the intention of this union to condemn those men who have fought for our nation and our freedom and deny them the right to learn a trade? Apparently that is the idea and that is one of the problems the Commonwealth Government and State Governments will have to overcome. How it will be overcome I do not know, for if unions refuse to teach returned men, the position will be difficult. You and I, Mr. President, can cast our minds back to the period following the 1914-18 war when employers and employees worked in harmony. Under a vocational training system, many of the returned soldiers were taught useful trades and some today are expert tradesmen. I hope that the decision reached by the Amalgamated



Engineering Union will not be carried into effect.

For many years I have been an advocate of the development of Albany as a port to provide for the economic transport of primary products from the Great Southern to oversea markets. I propose to quote remarks said to have been made by the Minister for Industrial Development during a recent visit to Albany. The following is the newspaper report:—

“The main purpose of the trip,” said the Minister, “is to ascertain the extent to which local residents are likely to co-operate in a practical way in supplying the labour needs of the mill, and in reducing the cost of electric current for the establishment from the Albany Municipality.”

The Minister said it would be necessary for the Albany people to do much more than just voice protests against the suggestion of the company to transfer portion of the mill to the metropolitan area. It was difficult to believe that the additional female labour required—about 10 hands at present—could not be obtained from a town of about 5,000 people and a road board district of over 2,000. He was sure that there were very many females in these areas employed in much less essential work which could not be compared with the value of the mill to Albany. To say nothing of incidental expenditure, the concern meant the distribution of about £50,000 in wages and other items alone annually in the town.

“The Government is anxious,” added the Minister, “to maintain the undertaking at Albany at full strength, and would probably be favourable to a substantial expansion of the woollen industry here after the war. However, it will be futile to expect the Government further to assist the company unless the Albany people take steps to make the necessary labour available. The company cannot be expected to carry on at Albany without sufficient labour, as this means idle machinery, lower production, increased general costs, and inability to compete successfully with similar products made in other States. I feel sure that additional labour can be obtained in the district, and would suggest the formation of a small local committee to approach females of suitable ages with a view to discussing with them the great importance and value of the mill as compared with the work they are now engaged in.”

“The cost of electric current for the mill is one for the Albany Municipality,” said Mr. Hawke. “This body represents the ratepayers of the town, and the attitude of the council in the matter will indicate to the Government the measure of potential support which the people of Albany are willing to give to the industry in order to retain it in the town in full strength and also to furnish it with a reasonable hope of substantial post-war development.”

The Minister considers this is quite a simple matter. Only 10 or 12 more females are required to be found—and the problem is solved. But I would point out that the Government has had serious trouble at the Claremont Mental Hospital for which it has not been able to provide sufficient nurses. The Government is also finding difficulty in providing staffs for country hospitals. One wonders why the Minister did not make the same demand on people in Perth as he made on the people of Albany; why he did not see that the Claremont Mental Hospital was fully staffed. If it was good enough for the Minister to tender the advice he did to the people of Albany, surely it was good enough to insist that the females in the metropolitan area who were doing non-essential work should do something to relieve the unfortunate position at Claremont, a situation we all regret. I do not blame the Government or the Minister for that trouble. I greatly sympathise with the Minister and with the nurses as well, but I think my criticism is justified.

The Chief Secretary: Have you any alternative to offer?

Hon. A. THOMSON: I will deal with that directly. I ask what justification the Minister has for saying that unless 10 additional females can be provided at Albany he may have to agree to the transfer of the blanket section of the woollen mill from Albany to Fremantle? What guarantee has he that if the section is transferred labour will be available at Fremantle, in view of the fact that the Government cannot maintain its own services? I consider that is reasonable criticism. The people of Albany and of the Great Southern as a whole have done their best to encourage the development of the mill and I will show how much encouragement the Government has given. The Minister also stated that the cost of electric current must be reduced. As a ratepayer of Albany for 43 years I will cheerfully face my share of any loss that may be incurred in a reduction of the charge to the Albany mill for electric current if that will assist in the retention of the mill.

I shall contrast the Minister's attitude towards the Albany Municipal Council with that of his Government. When the “Kybra” was commandeered by the Commonwealth

Government for war purposes, an appeal was made to the Government to compensate Albany for the loss of that ship. We requested that the Railway Department should take from Fremantle to Albany, at rates comparable to those charged by the State Shipping Service, the oil required by the council to produce electricity. The business people offered to load all consignments of other goods into special trucks, without the Railway Department's having to do any handling or carry any responsibility. The trucks would have been looked at Fremantle and opened at Albany. However, the answer was "No."

One of the reasons for the request was that the railway freights added to the cost of the electric current. I mention that to indicate that though the Minister for Works chastised the people of Albany for not doing their duty towards the woollen mill, nevertheless, when we asked for assistance from the Government in the way of railway freights comparable with those that had been charged by the State Shipping Service, so that the people might be compensated for the lost benefit of the seaborne freight rates, the Government said, "No, we cannot give any assistance at all." I feel justified in drawing the attention of the House and of the Minister to that position. The Government has helped the Albany mill by giving it contracts and advancing it money. Many of us in the Great Southern put money into the mill also with the idea of assisting it, but our £100 shares would not be worth more than £5 or £6 today. We have written off the debt but the Government has absolute security for its money in the assets.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The Government should have given a concession in the railway freights the same as has been given to other parts of the State.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes. The Minister for Works placed the responsibility on the people of Albany, but we know that the manpower authorities sent a woman to the Great Southern who went as far as Albany and called at every house, making herself exceedingly unpopular. As a result, all the women possible have been taken away and are in the Services. I propose to deal with that at a later stage. We appreciate what the Government has done for the mill at Albany but we do not like the Minister's calmly stating that if the district cannot

find another 10 or 12 women there is a possibility of the blanket section being transferred, especially as neither he nor anyone else can guarantee there will be sufficient female labour available to man the section at Fremantle. I hope we may be able to overcome this difficulty.

I cannot understand why the Commonwealth Government was not able to take the required action in connection with the unfortunate episode at the Claremont Mental Hospital recently. The Army provided a certain number of nurses to relieve the situation at Claremont, but to our astonishment they were withdrawn. Surely if the Commonwealth Government had power to compel soldiers to work on the wharves at Sydney for 6s. 6d. a day and show a profit of about £1,000,000 over and above the payments to the men who were employed in loading and unloading ships, it would have equal power with regard to Army nurses who could have continued working at Claremont! Surely the Commonwealth should have been able to provide the services of the nurses required for quite a long period!

To revert to the consideration of the Albany Woollen Mills, I trust the difficulties that have arisen will be overcome. I assure the Minister that not only the people who live in Albany, but those resident throughout the Great Southern districts are interested in the retention of the mills at Albany and their future success. Both here and in another place I have voiced my opinion that the Government has been decidedly shortsighted in its policy in not having had prepared a comprehensive plan for the future development of the port of Albany. That subject has been raised over past years. In 1926, at the request of the then Commonwealth Government, Sir George Buchanan submitted a report on Australian transport services and harbour facilities. He submitted a plan for the development of the harbour at Albany that appealed very much to me. I trust the Chief Secretary, when he is replying to the debate, will be able to give the House some information regarding this matter.

I certainly think the time has arrived when the Government should instruct the Director of Public Works to prepare an acceptable scheme for the future development of Albany. If that were done, any future expenditure could be part and parcel of a co-ordinated scheme. Apparently the Gov-

ernment is satisfied with the existing deep-water jetty, but for many years I have disapproved of that arrangement. I certainly favour the Buchanan scheme. I am aware that one section advocates the development of facilities at the bottom of York-street, while others hold that dredging and reclamation operations should be carried out with the object of establishing facilities in the vicinity of the oil tanks. My point, however, is that no concrete scheme has been prepared, and this is the time when we should prepare for the future development of the port of Albany.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The trouble is the centralisation policy of all Governments, which aims at promoting the interests of Perth and Fremantle.

Hon. A. THOMSON: That is so; my criticism refers to all State Governments. If a suitable rail and road plan were prepared it would enable direct loading to the ships to be carried out. The people throughout the Great Southern districts feel that they have been penalized over far too long a period. The State Government is willing to embark upon schemes for the North, for the provision of irrigation works and electric power schemes, and also for the establishment of a power house at South Fremantle.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That power house should be erected at Collie.

Hon. A. THOMSON: If attention were devoted to the lower Great Southern area, I am sure the productive capacity of that part of the State could easily be multiplied four or fivefold for a start. That in itself should be regarded as a national obligation. I hope the Chief Secretary will be able to tell us that this matter has been considered by the Government and that the Town Planning Commissioner and the Director of Public Works have been instructed to prepare a plan for the development of the much-neglected port of Albany so that the most economic and modern methods may be available for handling oversea trade.

The Commonwealth Minister for Commerce, Mr. Scully, has promised that we shall have a permanent appraisalment of wool at Albany and also the establishment of a drying plant. We have already had constructed there oil tanks that cannot, of course, be removed, and we look forward to the establishment at the port of superphosphate works and wool scouring activities. In

regard to these matters I would like to quote some remarks I made during the course of an interview with a representative of "The Albany Advertiser" some months ago. During my statement, I said—

A natural development with Albany as a permanent appraisalment centre would be a scouring and fellmongering works, which possibly would fit in with the Federal Government's desire to establish units of secondary industry in country areas and be assisted financially as a post-war development. The steady progress of the hinterland assuredly would mean greater numbers of lambs, sheep and pigs for treatment at the Albany Freezers and would bring about the need for additional facilities at the works. A corollary of this expansion would be the establishment of a treatment plant for the production of fertiliser and other by-products. An enlargement of the freezing works would provide greater accommodation for other exportable commodities, such as fruit, butter and eggs. A long standing agitation had been for the provision of a wheat terminal at the port, and here again support might be obtained from the Federal Government to bring pressure on the State body to make this development possible. With a greater volume of wool, wheat, fruit and frozen meat, as well as other products, awaiting shipment at Albany, the outgoing trade would encourage incoming trade, and eventually Albany could take her rightful place as the port of the whole of the Great Southern district.

I make no apology for urging the development of the port of Albany. Long before I entered Parliament I advocated that policy, and I have been a member of Parliament since 1914 except for a period of about 18 months. I have advocated the port's development not in the interests of Albany itself but for the benefit of the producers in the surrounding country districts. It is absolutely essential that the work should be undertaken now. If we are to compete in the world's markets we must be able to handle our commodities on the most economical basis. From Nurrogin southwards we should be able to despatch large quantities of commodities through the area's natural port of Albany. If we were to plan along those lines, we could easily increase the population in that part of the State four or five times over.

The pity of it is that no developmental plan is available so that anyone desirous of establishing works at Albany would know exactly where the shipping facilities would be finally established and where would be the best location for his proposed undertaking. My advocacy may sound parochial, but this is not really the position. I have consistently advocated

the development of the harbour facilities at Albany throughout my public career. When I read of the Minister for Works lecturing the Albany people for neglect to promote their own interests, I felt that the Government should at least prepare a scheme that would allow of all future expenditure of money at Albany being part and parcel of a co-ordinated scheme. I appeal to the Government to make that possible. All the Government need do is to issue the instructions, and the work will be done. In advocating the development of the port of Albany I have no desire to speak derogatorily of any other port in Western Australia, but it is obviously wrong that the producers in the Great Southern should be compelled to send their commodities to Fremantle for despatch overseas seeing that it involves them in the payment of double the amount of freight that would be necessary if they could ship through their natural port of Albany.

I now wish to refer briefly to the Commonwealth war housing scheme. The Premier is at present in the Eastern States and one of the problems to be discussed at the conference is the housing scheme. According to a report in "The West Australian" of the 17th June last the Premier, in referring to the housing programme in Western Australia, said *inter alia*—

This programme of 75 houses, even though it may prove to be uneconomic, is being undertaken to provide some easement, small though it may be, of the very acute housing shortage in certain parts of the State. It is being undertaken also to obtain information as to costs and design for a greatly extended programme to follow as soon as practicable.

I think the Workers' Homes Board could supply the Premier with full information about costs and designs, and certainly men such as builders and contractors could submit very useful and satisfactory information under this heading. I am fearful that some people who believe that they are going to get cheap houses will find themselves loaded up with a higher cost than they will be in a position to meet. The Premier continued—

The financial basis covering the housing programme has not yet been established.

The following is the important part of his statement:—

The first batch of houses will not be for sale; they will all be for letting, and the rents to be charged will take into account the cost

of interest, amortisation of the capital debt depreciation, administration, rates and taxes and ground rent. The rents charged to the tenants will, however, be within their capacity to pay.

That statement by the Premier sounds rather ambiguous. If the published statement is correct that for the houses being built the average cost will be £200 per room—this applies to houses being built at Bunbury—all I can say is that if we are going to charge a working man at the rate of £200 a room, he will not be in a position to pay all the charges mentioned by the Premier. On the other hand, if an occupant is to be charged a rent within his capacity to pay, it seems as if the Government is going to build quite a lot of houses that will result in loss to the State. Who is going to pay the balance of the money? The taxpayer, of course.

I can see the building trade as one providing an excellent avenue for employment. Thousands of homes will be required, but instead of forcing all the work into the Government avenue, we ought to encourage outsiders to use their capital in the building of homes. If this were done, we would be taking a long step towards easing the present acute position of housing. Still dealing with the building of houses, I wish to point out that the building by-laws of the local authorities are to be over-ridden. We have been told that 75 houses have been allotted to this State, and I understand that in building them, the height of the ceilings is to be reduced to 9ft. 6in.

Hon. H. Tuckey: That would be a great mistake.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am of the same opinion. Let me show what this reduction would mean in a house of four or five rooms. Even if the walls were only 6ft. or 9ft. high, the same roof, ceiling, floor, foundation, windows, doors, etc., would be required as for a house with higher walls. Taking a four-roomed house with walls 10ft. high, members may be surprised to learn that the difference made by a reduction of 6in. in the walls would represent only £6 or £8.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: I question those figures.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Do you mean £6 or £8 for the four rooms?

Hon. A. THOMSON: What I mean is that if the walls of such a house were raised another six inches, it would make a differ-

ence of only £7 or £8 to the cost of the house. I stand by that statement.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: It makes me smile. I know better.

Hon. A. THOMSON: In a five-roomed house the difference might amount to £12 or £15. I followed the building trade for many years and claim to know something about it. I feel that I am only doing my duty by calling attention to this matter. In the aggregate over all the houses to be built, a saving of £10 or £12 per house would represent a considerable sum, but in my opinion it is wrong to reduce the height of ceilings in order to make such a small saving to the individual.

Hon. V. Hamersley: To save that amount and ruin the house.

Hon. A. THOMSON. In my opinion that is what will happen. Reference is made in the Speech to far-reaching developments in hospital activities and organisation. Year in and year out both inside and outside this Chamber, I have taken strong exception to the hospital policy of the Government. The people in the country districts are told that if they want a hospital, they must bear half the cost, whereas if the people in the city want a new hospital, it costs them nothing.

Hon. V. Hamersley: That is right.

Hon. A. THOMSON: It is time the Government altered this policy. When it was inaugurated, I understand that Sir Hal Colebatch was Colonial Secretary, but successive Governments ever since I have been content to continue the policy. I enter a strong protest against a policy that compels a citizen outside the metropolitan area to subscribe to the cost of building a hospital while it permits residents of the metropolitan area to have hospitals built absolutely free. This shows how the taxpayers in the country are taxed to meet the needs of the sick. I would not object so much if the same system applied throughout the State. Why is this policy persisted in? I believe that the reason why the Government shows this consideration to the people of the metropolitan area is that there is greater voting strength in that area.

I wish to quote for the information of the House the position in which the Katanning people find themselves. Katanning is only a small road board area. Here is a letter which I have received from the Secretary

of the Katanning Road Board, dated the 15th July, 1944—

I have to advise that at the meeting of the Board held on the 12th instant, when the estimates for the current year were presented, it was pointed out that the health board would finish this year with a debit balance of approximately £304. This debit balance has been gradually increasing each year, and it appears to be impossible for the board to improve the position, owing to the fact that we are on the maximum health and sanitary rates allowed under the Health Act, this being 1½d. health rate, and ¾d. sanitary rate.

In the opinion of the board, this position is brought about by the fact that we are obliged to pay £414 per annum as hospital loan repayments from this revenue. Unless some relief is granted to the board it appears as though they are going to get into a hopeless position with their health account.

In 1924 the State Government agreed to build a new general hospital in Katanning on condition that the board paid half the cost of the building. This the board did. The building was erected at a total cost of something over £11,000, the board's share being £5,528 9s. 11d. As this was the base hospital for districts surrounding Katanning, an arrangement was made with two adjoining boards to contribute a certain sum each year to help with the annual loan repayments and interest charges, although this hospital serves quite a number of other road board districts. These payments were received by the Katanning board for a number of years, but have been discontinued for several years. The Katanning board is obliged to levy a special rate on its rate-payers in order to meet the charge of £414, each year. It has now a credit of £2,573 7s. 10d. in the sinking fund for this loan as at the 30th June last. Here is a communication from the Under Treasurer dated the 16th March, 1944—

A loan of £5,528 9s. 11d. was granted to the Katanning Road Board in 1927. The terms of the loan were—interest 5½ per cent. per annum; sinking fund 2 per cent. per annum payable half yearly and assumed to be accumulating at 4½ per cent. per annum. At the 31st December last the position was that the sinking fund accumulations amounted to £2,686 11s. 6d. and the outstanding debt was £2,841 18s. 5d. The loan will be fully repaid in 1954. I shall now read an addendum to the foregoing information, the addendum being furnished by the secretary of the Katanning Road Board—

This means that we pay an amount of £414 12s. 6d. for the next 10 years. The board will have paid a total of £10,764 to liquidate a debt of £5,528 9s. 11d.

Thus the Katanning Road Board, in effect, will pay the whole cost of the building and yet will not own it. Introducing its report of a speech made by the Chairman of the Lotteries Commission, "The West Australian" of the 17th June last says—

At the head of a list of contributions made by the Commission to hospitals and charities he placed the Perth Hospital, which had already received £201,139, and to which the Commission was committed to the extent of £1,300,000.

That the Lotteries Commission has done excellent work I freely acknowledge, and I take no exception to its assisting the Perth Hospital as it has done. Certainly the Commission has been as liberal as usual in aid given to country hospitals. I will go so far as to say that the Lotteries Commission has proved a great boon. But we find that the Perth people pay nothing. As a ratepayer of Katanning, I pay on my own home an annual hospital rate of 20s., over and above which I have to pay hospital tax, which I shall for the present ignore. Katanning has approximately 800 houses, and every householder in Katanning pays 10s. 6d. hospital rate.

In the metropolitan area there are 39,000 dwellings, and in metropolitan road boards 19,000. On the Katanning basis of 10s. 6d. per householder, metropolitan municipalities would pay annually £20,450, and road boards in the metropolitan area would pay £9,975; or an annual total of £30,425. I quote those figures merely to show the unfair incidence of the Government's policy. It is time that justice was done, either by making city and suburban householders pay their quota of the cost of maintaining country hospitals, or else by placing country districts in the same position as the metropolitan area. It is true that the Lotteries Commission pays one-third of the cost of the Katanning hospital, and local authorities one-third, and the Health Department the remaining third.

I am sorry that time does not permit of my dealing with many other things I desire to touch upon. Let me say only that I do hope we shall have displayed a genuine spirit of co-operation, and that this State's Government will in future do what it has failed to do in the past—co-operate with members of this Chamber in a common endeavour to improve the position which we all face. I support the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

On motion by Hon. J. A. Dimmitt, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.12 p.m.

## Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 22nd August, 1944.

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

### ELECTORAL—SWEARING-IN OF MEMBER.

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

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley took and subscribed the oath and signed the roll.

### QUESTION—SOUTH FREMANTLE POWER STATION.

*As to Vulnerability of Site.*

Mr. DONEY asked the Premier:

(1) Did he notice in "The West Australian" of the 9th inst., a statement by the Australian Prime Minister, reading:—"Tonight as Minister for Defence, I tell the people of South Australia, for instance, that their electricity supplies should not be produced in their present vulnerable locality. That is what happens when these things are left entirely to private enterprise or public instrumentalities"?

(2) If so, does this statement influence the State Government's decision to instal an electric power scheme in an obviously vulnerable position in the Prime Minister's own electorate at Fremantle?

(3) If it does not, will he state why?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) No.

(3) Vulnerability and all other factors were fully considered before the Government came to a decision, and the Army authorities were consulted.