

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 1), £2,700,000.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

House adjourned at 6.12 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 2nd August, 1945.

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fourth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [4.35]: I desire to join in the expressions of regret that, for health reasons, Mr. Willcock found it incumbent upon himself to resign the office of Premier of this State. Whatever differences we may have had in matters of policy, I think we are all agreed that Mr. Willcock left nothing to be desired as Leader of the Government and as a gentleman. As Premier, he was always readily approachable and was ever willing to listen to suggestions and requests and, as far as lay in his power, I think he was invariably helpful. I am glad, also, to congratulate the new Premier, Mr. Wise, on his succession to that office.

I was interested, last night, to hear Sir Hal Colebatch make reference to the manner in which Mr. Wise was approached and selected to come to this State. Very shortly after that period, I was staying for some time in the north of Queensland, and it was on the Atherton Tableland that quite a number of prominent agriculturists referred to the good fortune of Western Australia in having been able to secure the services of a young man who, in their estimation, was destined to go a long way as a tropical agricultural adviser. It is very pleasing to see that those prophecies have come true and I am sure we appreciate Mr. Wise equally as much as we appreciate Mr. Willcock.

If in extending congratulations to Mr. Marshall upon his elevation to Ministerial rank I modify my felicitations in that regard, I trust he will absolve me altogether from any desire to detract from his worthiness to be elevated to Ministerial rank. I have not the faintest desire to do any such thing, but I do want to say that, as a member representing a very important portion of the State, I think it is to be regretted that once again no place has been found in the Ministry for a representative of the South-West. I might be laying myself open to a charge of being parochial; but, be that as it may, I consider that is a fair statement. I think we could expect just a little bit better treatment than we have had. For the past 20 years, representation in the Cabinet has been denied the South-West though it has enjoyed the greatest prosperity and contributed in a large measure to the material progress of this side of the Commonwealth.

I am quite aware that the blame does not rest upon any individual shoulders; nor is any blame attachable to the Government. Apparently a majority of members in the Labour Caucus are unmindful of the importance of the South-West. That is the only reason I can advance, because in that Caucus there have been for many years several South-West representatives who, in my estimation, would have been quite capable of proving excellent Ministers. In speaking thus, I am voicing what has been in the minds of many people in the South-West for a long time. The matter has often been mentioned outside, and I thought that on this occasion I would repeat it in the House. In making this statement, I say again that I have no desire whatever to reflect in any way upon the election of Mr. Marshall, whom I regard as a very worthy member of another place.

His Excellency's Speech announces that agreement in connection with the principles involved in the establishment and operation of a War Service Land Settlement Scheme was reached at the Premiers' Conference in October, 1944, and as soon as details are finalised, legislation will be placed before us to give effect to it. Some of us have had quite a lot to do with land settlement, and we also have many vivid recollections of what happened on previous occasions. My mind goes back to the position following the 1914-18 war when soldier settlement was

brought into operation. We saw some extraordinary things done on that occasion and we want no more rural tragedies of that nature. Nor do we want a repetition of anything in the shape of what happened in the early days of group settlement. The lessons learnt in the implementation of both those schemes, I sincerely trust, will not be forgotten.

Group settlement, in spite of the mismanagement, setbacks and unpayable prices in the early days, has fortunately justified the claims of its sponsors, but we cannot forget that there were very many bitter disappointments and that they were suffered by very estimable people—hard-working, determined, honest, trustworthy men and women. They were forced off that land settlement scheme because of inefficiency on the part of some people who were put in charge of it, bureaucratic control, and some stupid individuals who were definitely square pegs in round holes. This war service settlement scheme should have much better prospects. Apparently much more planning and greater preparations are being made, and I feel sure that if the Director of Land Settlement, Mr. Fyfe, is given a reasonable chance and is not interfered with too much by outside influences, the scheme will tell a very different story from the other two that I have mentioned. Properly handled, it will make a very great difference to the productivity and wealth-producing aspects of Western Australia.

A great deal has been said and written in the Commonwealth lately regarding Commonwealth and State war housing projects. I do not know of any projected work in the last few years that has received the same amount of publicity as has housing. It has been talked of since the very earliest days of the war, but while it is a big question, I am afraid that up to date there has been a good deal more talk than there has been implementation. According to the Speech, 475 homes were approved for Western Australia to the 30th June last. Of that number 74 have been erected and are occupied, and 117 are in process of being erected. This covers 191, leaving us 284 behind the schedule, and is irrespective of any further approvals that can be expected during the current year. We realise that the manpower difficulty is playing quite a big part, but I believe that the

position could have been improved considerably. I make this statement after having had conversations with men who, some little time ago, were building homes of this type in the portion of the State I represent. I was told that if they were given their way, the number of houses built could be increased very considerably. This might have been a boast, but I do not think it was all boast.

The Honorary Minister: It is not correct.

Hon. W. J. MANN: At any rate, my informant seemed very sincere; he was a builder who should have known what he was talking about. In connection with this building project, we are bound to have a repercussion such as we have complained of for a number of years. In the past there have been complaints of the unreasonable attitude adopted by the unions with regard to apprentices; and it did not need a war to make us understand that there was a shortage of builders. Prior to the war it was possible to get builders; but competition for them was very keen, particularly when the Eastern States came into the picture, and began to lure some of them away.

Hon. C. B. Williams: That is a good one!

Hon. W. J. MANN: The present position—and even if hostilities should cease—must be accentuated. That has largely been brought about by the fact that the unions resolutely set their face against anything in the way of encouragement of apprentices. I have forgotten the ratio of journeymen to one apprentice, but I know that in some walks of life the same thing is happening and that the ratio of journeymen demanded before one can employ an apprentice is altogether out of proportion.

Hon. C. B. Williams: They preferred to import foreign labour rather than teach our own youths.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I think we will have to keep hoping for quite a while before we find that the demand for houses is met to any appreciable extent. There is another point which strikes me in connection with houses. I notice from the Lieutenant-Governor's Speech that these approvals have been made for the metropolitan area and the country towns. I sincerely trust that it is not proposed to stop there. Of

course, the metropolitan area and the country towns will need a proportion of houses; but I want to see the scheme extended to include men and women on the land. The housing problem is just as acute in the remote rural areas as it is in the cities and towns; and if we want to attract people into the country and induce them to go outback—I mean away from the established towns—we shall have to give them decent houses. For too long the idea has prevailed that any sort of shelter is good enough for the man on the land. It has been a wicked idea all along, that a man should live and attempt to rear a family in a shack in the country that would be prohibited in the city. Nobody has seemed to think that he desired any help, no matter how hard he worked and even though he was not making much more than half the basic wage. I know for a fact that what I am going to say is true: Many boys and girls have left the parental roof because the old home did not have the attraction for them that was to be gained by their going away. I know boys who have gone away from their homes, instead of staying on the farm and helping their fathers; they have even gone to work for someone else because they could thereby gain better living conditions.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Surely some of them have to leave the farms! These people have large families and they cannot all stay on the one block.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Quite a lot is to be said for the extension of the scheme in that direction. A reference is made in the Speech to what has usually been referred to, for a quarter of a century to my knowledge, as the South-West Power Scheme. It is gratifying to know that at long last the justification for the scheme has been acknowledged and that the Government proposes, in due course, to put it into operation. I believe that the cheaper electricity will revolutionise that portion of the country. That has occurred in most other countries where cheap current has been available, and I feel quite sure that the scheme will lead to the same degree of progress being made in the South-West of this State.

I also wish to call the attention of the Government to the question of harbours in the South-West and southern portions of the State. It seems to me that each year

the necessity for improvements to harbours is referred to, the Government quietly side-tracks it by a mild kind of promise that the matter will be looked into; but it does not go much further than that. We can see—we are being forced to see—that the future of the progress of this State lies in the southern and south-western portions; and as those portions become more active, as primary and secondary industries become established, the necessity for harbours will be emphasised. The existing harbours will need money spent upon them, but it will be money well spent. The hauling of products from as far as Manjimup and other portions of the State to Fremantle for shipment cannot continue economically for ever. I urge the Government to give just a little more consideration to claims being made for assistance for the ports along the south-western and southern sections of the coast.

The question of schools and education generally is one that is causing quite a lot of controversy in the country today. One of the results of the war has been the reduction in the teaching staffs of smaller schools; and in one portion of the area I represent, where there were five schools at one time, only one is in operation now. It became necessary for children to be driven miles in order to obtain proper educational facilities. This matter has been brought before the Minister for Education, and I am sure that he will assist so far as he possibly can; but I want to reiterate that it is a matter of very considerable moment. I was at a meeting at Northcliffe not long ago, when a very bonny girl, 12 years of age, was introduced to us. She had never been to a school and had never had an opportunity to do so. The distance to the nearest school was too far for her to travel.

Hon. C. B. Williams: What about the correspondence classes?

Hon. W. J. MANN: I know there are correspondence lessons, but that system goes only part of the way. It is perhaps quite an excellent substitute, but it does not measure up to the advantages accruing from attendance at school, mixing with other children and receiving the personal attention of teachers. I notice from a perusal of His Excellency's Speech that the Government proposes to re-introduce legislation dealing with the franchise of the Legislative Coun-

oil and some matters related to that question. I had intended making some reference to the matter at this stage, but I think it preferable to wait until we know what the measure seeks to achieve and then give expression to our views. I support the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [5.2]: I think it the duty of every member, when participating in the current debate, to offer thanks to the Fighting Services, both our own and those of our Allies, for the present satisfactory position in which the Empire and we ourselves stand today. I also think that each of us must place on record the debt we owe to the late Prime Minister of the Commonwealth. It was with extreme regret that we noted his passing. However, it did bring to mind the onerous task imposed on public men these days. I fear that we, as Australians, probably through being so critical, place too great a burden upon men who stand forth as our leaders. The task that we place upon them imposes such a physical strain that few can stand that strain for more than a relatively brief period.

We find that within a comparatively few years Australia has lost two able Prime Ministers as a result of the ravages of one disease. It is becoming apparent to all who know the physical answer, that the strain placed upon public men today is too great. Under our form of Government we must either learn to place a lessened strain upon these men, or adopt some different method of criticism of men who are doing what they consider best in the interests of the community even though their opinions may differ from those we hold or their actions such that we ourselves would not take. The matter is brought nearer home to us when we realise that after nearly ten years of office the Premier of this State has found the burden too great. Every member of this House will feel regretful that Mr. Willcock has found it necessary to relinquish the reins of office. Much as we would like to congratulate his successor, Mr. Wise, on his accession to the Premiership, we and the public generally must realise that we are still asking too much of our leaders.

For my own part, I must express my regret at the failure of the Government to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate

health and hospital matters, a motion in favour of which was readily agreed to by this House. Conditions have not improved in the time that has elapsed since I last spoke, and the dissatisfaction amongst the nurses and the hospital staffs generally has not lessened. On the contrary, that dissatisfaction led, unfortunately, to something of a most unusual nature when an ancillary part of my profession held a stop-work meeting of members of the hospital domestic staffs. I trust that it will not be necessary for that movement to go any further and that it will not, in fact, develop, but that some method will soon be found to place the conditions of those employees on a more satisfactory basis. The public conscience is awakening and health affairs bid fair to disturb the equanimity of the Government if it prefers methods of *laissez faire*. It might be well for that fact to be noted by those in charge of health matters in this community. There is one State in Australia where the Premier has made it quite well known that he owes his seat and continued Ministerial office to the interest displayed by his Government in the health of the community and, as an added reason, to the services the Government had been able to render with regard to educational facilities.

I feel I must mention certain matters that, in the interests of the public, should be inquired into by the Government of the day without any further delay. The milk supply of the City of Perth is not beyond question, and there is one factor outstanding among many others that should call for a protest from this House and for an immediate inquiry by those in charge of our milk supplies. I have made the statement in this House and have made it publicly elsewhere; I repeat it now when I say that milk can be taken from an unregistered dairy, mixed with the other milk supplies of the city and be sold to the public either in country districts or in the metropolitan area itself. The present situation is such that all that happens when the dairy is unregistered is that it can continue to sell milk to depots, but will receive 8d. a gallon less than would have been paid had the dairy remained registered. The milk from that unregistered dairy can be mixed with milk from registered dairies and be forthwith sold to the public. There is no call upon the depot concerned to pasteurise that milk. I

trust that if legislation is introduced in Parliament this year to alter the method of sale and distribution of milk supplies, the safety and cleanliness of milk will not be forgotten.

There are dairies not far from Perth that should be condemned, and it is a matter for discussion as to whether dairies should be allowed within a given distance of the centre of the city. I have seen in a dairy not far removed from the centre of Perth, a room—if one cared to designate it as such—with hessian walls, corrugated iron for the roof and the absence in one corner of a sheet of iron served the purposes of a chimney. In that room half-castes slept; they were apparently attendants in that dairy. That so-called room is in almost direct contact with the milking sheds. Such a source of supply should not be tolerated these days in this fair city of ours. I am aware—in fact, I have been made aware of the fact—that the price which is paid for milk is much less than is paid for such unnecessary commodities as aerated waters and flavoured drinks, but I do not think that cost of materials should be allowed to stand in the way of cleanliness. If it is necessary to produce milk, it is necessary to produce clean milk. The question of at what cost should be a matter for separate investigation. We cannot tolerate, because of the fact that the price is inadequate for the production of clean milk, the distribution of unclean milk throughout the city areas. I trust that the promised legislation will not be devoted purely to considerations of quota or distribution of milk, but will make a serious attempt to alter present conditions and ensure that the supply of milk to the community is clean and safe. Later on when the Bill is before the House I shall give particulars of recent legislation that has been introduced in other States and in Great Britain.

The Government, I trust, will recognise the necessity for pasteurising all milk until some Utopia is reached in which clean milk can be produced and supplied to children for consumption, with a definite assurance that it is clean and safe. It is interesting to note that recently in Melbourne a committee which investigated the local milk supply reached the conclusion that not one pasteurising plant operating there was

suitable for use in a big scheme for pasteurising the whole of the milk supply of the city of Melbourne. The committee recommended that two separate plants be erected at a very large cost for the purpose. I hasten to add that the committee was not of the opinion that all the pasteurising plants in Melbourne were inefficient; some were, but a few were efficient. However, they were not large enough, in the opinion of the committee, to justify their existence in a large scheme to make the milk of the community safe.

I also draw the attention of the House to the way in which our meat is distributed. One sees meat slung about in almost any fashion. Under proper conditions, the meat is covered during carriage and submitted to as little handling as possible from the time of slaughtering to the time of consumption; but I have seen carcasses lying on the floor of a truck, from which they are picked up by a man who throws them over his shoulder and takes them from the truck to the shop. He is not wearing a uniform, nor is he provided with any washable protection for his shoulder. While we are considering the milk distribution we might at the same time consider the distribution of meat. Then again, it is a common sight also in this city to see a small boy running with a couple of loaves of bread under his sweater-covered arm. He leaves the bread at the back door. I was told of an amusing incident that occurred the other day. A man was up in time to see the boy scraping the burnt ends of a loaf against the cart-wheel!

The public of Western Australia is losing faith in the distribution of its food supplies. It is quite common to hear persons discuss the conditions in ordinary conversation, and the word "appalling" is not infrequently used to describe them. I hope it will not be long before modern methods of distribution of milk, meat and bread are introduced here. I regret that the State is still without a Commissioner of Public Health. No-one knows better than I do the difficulty of securing medical men for these appointments, because they are needed in the Fighting Services. I still regret the conditions which led to the retirement of Dr. C. L. Park. I also regret that the City of Perth has no medical officer. In the past it had the services of part-time medical officers, but I am of opinion that

the time has arrived for the appointment of a full-time medical officer for the city, as it has grown considerably. I understand the Perth City Council is discussing the matter; but at the moment, owing to the death of Dr. Kasner Moss, the position is vacant. Apart from Dr. Kingsbury, the Acting Commissioner of Public Health, we have no medical officer in charge of our health services, either city or State, and it is a matter of urgency that these positions should be filled. I assure the House that I will do everything in my official position on the Medical Co-ordination Committee to try to fill the posts.

The position which has now arisen with regard to some city cafes must surely be attributed to the absence of medical officers. It is enlightening to read the newspaper comments on those cafes, especially when one realizes that they were put out of bounds for servicemen by doctors in the Services. Evidently they considered the cafes were not in a sufficiently hygienic state to permit the members of the Services to dine in them. Apparently, however, some degree of satisfaction with their condition must have been expressed by the officers in charge of the health department of the City of Perth. We come to the question of what is thought to be clean. In my opinion, the question of sanitation can only be satisfactorily dealt with by trained medical officers; they should be the persons responsible for deciding what are suitable hygienic conditions in eating-houses. I hope it will not be long when, by a united effort, we shall ensure that there is adequate medical supervision of our health services.

Hon. A. Thomson: It is a grave reflection on the doctors who closed the cafes to members of the Services when one considers that they are remaining open for civilians.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: That is probably owing to the fact that a lay body is making decisions which should be come to by trained medical officers. It bears out the contention which I have held all along that there should be professional control over professional matters. No-one but a medical officer should decide upon the hygienic and sanitary conditions of our public eating-houses. It is for that reason I deplore the absence of medical advice in both our State and city organisations. One of the difficulties is that

there is very little liaison between the various departments dealing with the health of the city. Let me return to the question of milk. The milk inspector is not a health inspector, although he could be made a health inspector if the Commissioner agreed. Under present conditions, the milk inspector is acting merely in an advisory capacity in health matters. If he inspects a dairy he can do no more than advise the health inspector to visit the dairy, but by the time the health inspector does so, some minor alteration has probably been effected. All this leads to extreme difficulty in policing the law relating to the cleanliness of dairies. A health inspector visiting a dairy can even be refused a sample of milk; the proprietor can say that the milk is not for consumption or sale.

All along trouble has been experienced in carrying out the provisions of the Health Act. There should be a much closer connection between these bodies. I am wondering whether some advisory committee or advisory board could be formed that is interested in health matters and that could meet from time to time and make these problems known to each member of the committee or board. It is essential that some re-organisation of the whole of our health services be undertaken in the near future. The time is approaching, I hope very soon, when medical officers will be more freely available, and if we prepare a plan for expanding our health services we shall have positions ready to offer the doctors who are being discharged from the services. In my opinion, the State and the city are lagging far behind modern public opinion in health matters.

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

House adjourned at 5.27 p.m.