

out of balance. That is tantamount to asking the men and the employers to give a blank cheque. We feel that there should be some better method adopted whereby any insolvency of the fund might be met. For a moment I do not suggest that an increase, both in the miners' and the employers' contribution, will be necessary after the next report by the actuary. But to say that the number of men employed in the industry should be divided into the amount of the balance in the fund to fix the contribution is rather drastic. That is the reason why I have brought this motion forward for the disallowance of the regulation.

If some method could be adopted whereby the men and employers—and I am speaking principally on behalf of the men—can enter into an arrangement similar to that which was made last year when the increased contributions were brought about, it would be all right. But to say that one has merely to arrive at the amount of contribution by the employers and employees by dividing the number of employees into the balance disclosed by the actuary is asking too much. That is the main point of this regulation to which objection is taken. I sincerely hope that the Minister will give consideration to some method of altering it so that it will be nearly comparable with the arrangement entered into between the Minister and the men prior to the introduction of the legislation last year.

On behalf of the men I appeal to the Minister either to amplify that regulation or to adopt some more moderate means of arriving at any solution which may be necessary to meet the deficiency of the fund, if such is revealed by the next actuarial report which will be made, in all probability, on the 30th June, 1950. I hope that the Minister in preference to passing the regulation will give consideration to amending it in some way whereby it will meet with the approval of those directly concerned.

On motion by the Minister for Housing, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 10.35 p.m.*

## Legislative Council.

Thursday, 14th July, 1949.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

### BILL—TUBERCULOSIS (COMMONWEALTH AND STATE ARRANGEMENT).

Read a third time and *passed*.

### BILL—SUPPLY (No. 3), £4,700,000.

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

**HON. E. H. GRAY** (West) [2.21]: I concur with the remarks made by Mr. Bennetts yesterday regarding the decision of the Government to continue the session from last year and not to adopt the usual procedure of having an official opening with a Speech from His Excellency the Governor. This gives members an opportunity to impress upon the people the great importance attached to both the Commonwealth and State Parliaments as regards protecting our democracy. Present-day troubles are attributable to the indifference of people and particularly the average young man and woman, to politics and the business of the organisations to which they belong. They just leave everything to luck as it were, with the result that things happen that absolutely stagger them later on. Generally speaking, it can be said to have been caused by the growing feeling—it was particularly apparent during the war period—of absolute indifference with respect to social welfare, politics and the doings of organisations to which most people belong.

The Address-in-reply debate affords members an opportunity to ventilate the requirements of their districts and constituents and, for that reason, is valuable. Western Australia is a very large State, and each member representing a Council province or an Assembly district, if he does his duty properly, is besieged with inquiries from all sorts of organisations, particularly

those which are engaged in social work and trying to improve the conditions of the people. Therefore I am definitely of the opinion that the Address-in-reply debate is not a waste of time. Further it gives Ministers an opportunity to clear up misunderstandings and reply to criticism. I am satisfied that honest, straightforward criticism is of great assistance to any Government that is trying to carry out its duties successfully. The excision of the Address-in-reply debate this year has caused me to adopt the unusual course of speaking on the Supply Bill in order to discuss several matters of importance.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : What difference does it make ?

Hon. E. H. GRAY : Usually members do not indulge in a big debate on the Supply Bill. Normally, the measure is passed after the Leader of the House has moved the second reading and a few members have added their remarks, and it is agreed to on the day on which it is introduced. On this occasion the Chief Secretary has been generous enough to allow us ample time to discuss the various matters we desire to bring before the House.

I do not claim to be a financial expert, but there is a feeling of uneasiness with regard to Government expenditure. It came as a great surprise to many people to hear the announcement by the Premier that the deficit for the financial year just ended had amounted to £864,813, instead of £164,000, which was the deficit he budgeted for. The Premier over-estimated the revenue by £750,000, and this in face of the fact that during the past ten years the revenue of the State has almost doubled. During the financial year just ended, the Government spent £21,500,000 which, I understand, constituted an all-time record.

For many months the financial difficulties confronting Britain and the countries of Europe have been stressed, debated and rigorously examined in those countries by experts of undoubted integrity and high reputation. Surely the thunder clouds heralding the threatening crisis, should have made the Government more careful in its expenditure ! It has been publicly stated by a prominent man that the present deplorable mining crisis is small potatoes compared with the difficulties that all nations must face in the immediate future. For weeks the Prime Ministers

have stressed the fact that we are about to meet a financial storm and must gird ourselves accordingly.

Therefore the Government, which claims to be composed of business men, has something for which to answer to the people, and this, I claim, is the reckless extravagance in which it has indulged. Apparently the Treasurer has not exercised a firm control over expenditure such as existed when the Willcock and Wise Governments were in office. I used to feel somewhat resentful of the firm grip exercised by those Governments.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : Are you taking into consideration the 40-hour week ?

Hon. E. H. GRAY : That is a comparatively small thing.

Hon. L. A. Logan : You have not much idea of finance if you think it only a small thing.

Hon. E. H. GRAY : The 40-hour week alone does not justify the tremendous deficit, and I do not think anyone could reasonably contend that it does.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : It has a lot to do with the increased expenditure.

Hon. E. H. GRAY : Something to do with it, but not all. It has become a general practice of all employers to blame the 40-hour week for increased costs. I do not think the Government can advance that as a reasonable excuse. Admittedly it has been the cause of portion of the deficit, but surely it cannot be argued that at a time when we had a record expenditure of £21,500,000, the 40-hour week was the cause of so huge a deficit. My opinion is that the Government has not exercised control over expenditure such as was exercised by the Labour Governments. In past years you yourself, Mr. President, before you were elevated to the high position you now hold, gave in this Chamber very carefully prepared criticisms of Government expenditure. Your speeches were listened to most attentively and were a valuable contribution to the debates.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : Tell us where we wasted money.

Hon. E. H. GRAY : I also recall, going back for a long time, that in this Chamber the late Hon. A. Lovekin, the late Hon. J. Nicholson and the late Hon. J. J. Holmes did not hesitate to criticise what they

considered to be the extravagances of the then existing Governments, whether Liberal or Labour.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : Do you know how most of the deficit was incurred ?

Hon. E. H. GRAY : I remember vividly the good work those members did. Although we, as Labour members, could not wholly agree with them, they were an efficient brake on the Government of the day and there is no doubt that Ministers took much notice of them and of their contributions on finance, which were of great assistance to the then Governments.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : It is a pity your Government did not spend a little more on the railways.

Hon. E. H. GRAY : The Honorary Minister forgets that when the previous Government was in power there was a war on.

Hon. G. Fraser : Anything is an excuse now.

The PRESIDENT : Order !

Hon. E. H. GRAY : The Honorary Minister made a mistake in that interjection.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : No fear !

Hon. E. H. GRAY : If the Honorary Minister would carefully examine the history of the railway and tramway systems, he would lay the blame on some Government other than the Labour Government.

Hon. G. Fraser : Particularly the Government of 1930-33.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : What about the Government of 1933-39 ?

Hon. E. H. GRAY : I suggest that we are faced with troubles near at hand that must be met with courage, firmness, and financial efficiency. I am sorry to say that I do not think the present Government has displayed those virtues.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : That is all right. That is what you are here for.

Hon. E. H. GRAY : That is the general impression I find all over the State. The Government has spent money recklessly and has had to depend on the Grants Commission to make up the deficit. Undoubtedly, we have received generous treatment from the Commission, but the Government should realise that this state of affairs cannot go on indefinitely.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : Give us some instances.

Hon. E. H. GRAY : The Government has incurred a deficit of nearly £900,000 in a year when it had the record revenue in the history of the State. That, in my opinion, justifies my accusation of reckless expenditure.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : You know the value of money today.

Hon. E. H. GRAY : I do, but that does not explain it.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : Give us instances of where we spent money recklessly.

Hon. E. H. GRAY : It is the Honorary Minister's duty to review the activities of the Government. I am saying that there is among the people a feeling of uneasiness at the way in which the Government has managed and spent the State's money. Notwithstanding the 40-hour week, the Government could have realised its responsibility and proceeded carefully ; it should not have presented Parliament with such a big deficit.

Several members interjected.

Hon. E. H. GRAY : Hon. members will have a chance later to criticise my remarks. I would ask them to keep quiet for a little while. There are other matters I would like to mention briefly. Apart from the financial irresponsibility of the Government, I think the biggest mistake it made—as was pointed out in another place—was to hand over to Amalgamated Collieries, Ltd., the rich present of the Black Diamond coal leases. The matter was discussed in another place fully last year and I mentioned it in this Chamber. The opinions then expressed in both Houses on the deplorable mistake made by the Government have been fully justified by recent happenings.

The statements made by Hon. A. R. G. Hawke in another place absolutely shocked me when I read them. Had this been done by a body of businessmen who laid no claim to business acumen, I would not have been surprised ; but the members of the present Government claim to be businessmen. Yet they have so much regard for private enterprise that they first fell into the mistake of granting these leases to the company, and then followed on making other mistakes which will cause a sensation when the people of the State come to realise the full effect of them. Personally, I was much disappointed

at the handing over of the leases to Amalgamated Collieries, because the Government had a splendid opportunity to make them available to the State Electricity Commission.

We cannot compare the open-cuts on the Black Diamond leases with the big open-cuts at Yallourn in Victoria; but we had the opportunity of another Yallourn at Collie, although not as big as the one in Victoria. This would have given the State Electricity Commission an opportunity of developing a mining venture on the lines of the one in Victoria, and that mine would have been the policeman in the Collie district. Our great trouble in this State is that we are being domineered by the powerful Amalgamated Collieries, Ltd.

Hon. H. Hearn: It is not as powerful as the coalminers.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I think it is far more powerful than the coalminers, seeing what it has accomplished in 12 months. The Government had an opportunity, which the previous Government visualised, of our State Electricity Commission being in possession of its own coalmine in order to develop the plans that have been discussed for years past to supply electricity to the south-west portion of the State and make Western Australia absolutely invulnerable to shortage of power supplies. Yet this opportunity was deliberately given to private enterprise. I think the Government thought it was doing the right thing, as it did not believe in governmental activities.

Our State Electricity Commission is composed of qualified and highly capable men who could have developed those coal leases, which would have been of great benefit to the people of Western Australia generally and of special benefit to the people of Collie. Anybody who knows Collie will be able to understand why the miners there sometimes get bad-tempered. Private enterprise does not bother about the conditions of the working men.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Yes, it does.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Some firms do, but Amalgamated Collieries does not. We have instances of the fact that private enterprise does not bother. One can go to Yallourn in Victoria and see the wonderful organisation which exists there and which is producing power for the Victorian Electricity Commission. One can examine all the amenities provided for the men—the hostel, the private homes, the beautiful

gardens in the township. Having seen those features, one can go next door, within a quarter of a mile, and see the absolutely depraved conditions of the mines under private enterprise. Here in Western Australia, there has been a chance for the Government to assist in resolving differences of opinion between the miners and the bosses.

The Government could have developed those leases, using the same contractors as the mining company has employed. I refer to Bell Bros., an established firm in this State, which works for local authorities all over Western Australia and particularly in the metropolitan area. The firm is a good one and is working for Amalgamated Collieries on one of the Black Diamond leases. It could have done the job for the State with better results than have been achieved. But notwithstanding the strenuous protests made in another place and here about the action of the Government, further mistakes were made. This company was given the leases and carried out its plans to remove the overburden and develop the mine. The next thing we know is that the company approached the Government for a guarantee of £90,000 to develop the property.

Hon. G. Fraser: It could not be done through our Rural and Industries Bank, but the Government had to go to private enterprise!

Hon. E. H. GRAY: That was bad enough; but worse than that—the Government had to surrender to the Bank of New South Wales first call upon the assets and securities of this firm. I challenge the Chief Secretary or the Honorary Minister to vindicate an action of that kind. The £90,000 could have been guaranteed through the Rural and Industries Bank, and the country thus saved a fair amount of money. Instead of that, representations were made by the company and Mr. Downing and £90,000 was guaranteed by the State Government through the Bank of New South Wales whose prayer every day, I should imagine, is that the Rural and Industries Bank will be a rank failure. Like sheep going to the slaughter, members of the Government agreed without protest to give the guarantee through this bank, besides handing over first call to the bank on the company's securities. That charge has been made in another place very fully by Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, and I think it calls for a reply and an explanation.

But there is worse than that! According to the files, some dissatisfaction was expressed by Bell Bros., and certain charges were made in another place which caused the Government to act very quickly, with the result that an engineer, Mr. James Johnstone, was brought from Sydney to make a report on the work already carried out by the mining company and on its methods in removing the overburden so that the coal could be taken out by the open-cut method. Mr. Johnstone is a well-known and competent coalmine engineer, and I understand that his report was very derogatory to the mining company.

The Government has had the report for some time. It criticised the wasteful way in which the company was doing the job and suggested new methods regarding sidings and other things, which would have been of great assistance in the economical expenditure of the money required to carry out the work. So far as I can understand, neither the Minister nor the Government has done anything in the matter. I hope I am wrong. I hope that when a reply is made to these remarks, it will be to the effect that action has been taken to protect the State's interests. If we accept this report, and I think we must do so, it is an indication that the mining company—one section of private enterprise; the people held up as economical managers of finance—has gone about this big job in a very extravagant manner.

The engineer, Mr. Johnstone, recommended that certain things should be done; but so far as I can gather, nothing has been done. I may be wrong; but from what I can ascertain, the company has continued to pursue its wasteful methods and no alteration has been made. It was impressed on the Government by members of both Houses of Parliament that a serious mistake had been committed in the first place. That should have made the Government fully alive to its responsibilities and the necessity of policing vigilantly the operations. Instead of that, the company has asked for, and obtained, what it wants and has done what it liked; and according to the report of the engineer, the result has been a reckless waste of money to which no Government should agree. But this Government has meekly accepted that.

I think it is one of the greatest mistakes any Government has made in the last half century, and I do not consider the people

are entitled to take it very calmly. I hope that the Minister will be able effectively to reply to these remarks; but I am afraid he will not be able to do so, because, so far as I can gather, the facts I have laid before the House cannot be challenged. The Government has been very irresponsible and inactive with regard to this onslaught on the public, which is what it amounts to. The Government has made other mistakes, particularly with regard to allowing private enterprise to have the Subiaco-Nedlands tram route. But the major mistake is the one I have just mentioned, plus inadequate financial government.

Then again, I would like to ask the Honorary Minister for Agriculture whether the department or the Government has given consideration to the argument proceeding in Australia with regard to the alteration of the f.a.q. standard of wheat. I know this is not a very popular topic with some people. I do not think the Honorary Minister for Agriculture is very enamoured of it, but I am just as keen on it as I have ever been. Fortunately for the people of New South Wales—that State is the hub of the argument—last season's wheat was of such high quality that it seemed to quieten the agitation for a change in the method of selling wheat. But that does not get away from the statements I have made previously in this Chamber that the farmers—that is, the good farmers—are losing money through keeping to the present f.a.q. basis. That is the opinion of the experts in England and in Australia. I think the most capable man to judge the position in Western Australia is Dr. Sutton, and he is keenly interested in this change.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: What is the good of the farmers grading wheat if the Commonwealth Government sells it at an old price?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: It does not.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: It does, and you know it.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: If the farmers could be assured of always receiving the present price of wheat, they would be on the pig's back for ever, but it is the duty of the Government, the farmers and those who handle wheat, to prepare for the inevitable rainy day. When the Minister and the Government are confronted with a statement, which they cannot challenge, by an expert from the Old Country, that the farmers are losing money under the system of selling

wheat on the f.a.q. standard, they ought to take some notice of it. What surprises me most is that Westralian Farmers Ltd., the farmers' co-operative company, which has been in the front rank for years in looking after the interests of the man on the land, is so disinterested in this vital question. It is a sign that that company has got so prosperous that it has become conservative and indifferent to the welfare of the farmers who constitute its shareholders.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : Why did not your Government do something about it ?

Hon. E. H. GRAY : This agitation has been going on only for the last two or three years.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : You have been all this time bringing it forward !

Hon. E. H. GRAY : No, it has been going on for a considerable time; but it came to light two or three years ago. I have mentioned this every session that I have been in this House. I think the time will come when the Government will have to take notice.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : When did you find out that the f.a.q. standard was wrong ?

Hon. E. H. GRAY : I learned of it through discussing the matter with Dr. Sutton and the master bakers of Western Australia. They were not satisfied. I am thinking of export wheat as a reason why I want better wheat milled into flour for the people of Western Australia.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : Did you use your influence with your colleague, the ex-Minister for Agriculture, in the matter ?

Hon. E. H. GRAY : As far as I remember, this was not a live question when the Labour Government was in power.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : It is not very live now.

Hon. E. H. GRAY : Yes, it is.

Hon. L. A. Logan : When did Dr. Kent-Jones come here ?

Hon. E. H. GRAY : I think it was about two years ago. I gave his report in this Chamber. I would like the hon. member to produce some authority to show that Dr. Kent-Jones was wrong. He was not an interested party. He is one of the most

prominent men in England, and he went to New South Wales at the invitation of the bakers to make a report on the matter. His report, which was a long one, stated that the farmers—of course, he meant the good farmers, the same as I do—were losing money by allowing their wheat to be sold under the f.a.q. system.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : There are only two men in Western Australia who agree with him.

Hon. E. H. GRAY : That is the part of his report which applied to the farmers of Australia. Other portions of it set out the reasons for grading better wheat in the interests of the people, and to help the bakers to produce a better loaf of bread.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : You have not yet suggested anything in its place. What do you suggest, so that I can reply to you ?

Hon. E. H. GRAY : The Honorary Minister for Agriculture has a copy of the report on his files. The suggestion contained in it is that there should be two or three grades.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : Dr. Sutton has switched from that now and is saying something else.

Hon. E. H. GRAY : He might say there should be two grades. I have discussed this with him. I know there are difficulties in the way, and it will take a long time to get the farmers to agree to it. The farmer will not listen when he is getting all the money he is at the moment for a bushel of wheat; but the time will come when the price will fall. It will then be an easy matter to divide the State into districts where this particular wheat can be grown, and it should not be very expensive to sell under the two or three-grade method. We do not want to adopt the system that applies in Canada or America. The Honorary Minister for Agriculture is a farmer himself, and I think that he and the department should study this matter. We cannot reasonably cast aside the opinions of Dr. Sutton who was for many years a competent servant of this State. I am not speaking as a layman, but with the backing of Dr. Kent-Jones, the most eminent man in the British Empire on this question.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham : Dr. Kent-Jones believes in planting wheat for flour, but he wants us to produce a high quality wheat at the same price.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: The bakers will not pay any more for a high quality wheat. They want it all at the same old price.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: No.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Yes, I have asked them.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The Honorary Minister for Agriculture has got that tangled a bit. We had better be careful what we say about this. The bakers are prepared to pay a reasonable price for a good article. Nowadays, from January to April, the people are treated rather badly because of the new flour that comes on the market. In New South Wales last year the wheat had a particularly high protein content. Since last year rapid progress has been made in New South Wales by the Bread Research Institute, which is working in close co-operation with the New South Wales Government—a Labour Government, too—and the Western Australian master bakers have affiliated with that organisation in an endeavour to get things moving in this State. Next week Mr. Eric E. Bond, Director of the Bread Research Institute, will be in Perth. He will spend a short time here and visit as many bakers and farmers as is possible. Next Saturday at 7.30 p.m. he is to give a lecture on bread and wheat in the Women's Service Guild rooms in Cecil Buildings, Sherwood Court. I would like farmer members of this Chamber to attend.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You had better go there and get more reliable information.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I am giving reliable information, and I would like Sir Charles to attend that meeting. This man has made a wonderful success of the institute in Sydney, and will be worth listening to. If members desiring to be present at the meeting will notify me, I will make arrangements accordingly, as this question affects the welfare of our farmers.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: I suppose the Women's Service Guild will worry the life out of me after hearing this man.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: It is the first time Mr. Bond has been to the State, and I hope that as a result of his visit and discussions with farmers, if he can get near them, there will be a decided quickening in this State in the movement to have something done with regard to the alteration of the f.a.q. standard of wheat.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: The movement requires some stimulus. It is dead now.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: In times of prosperity people become lethargic and remain satisfied. We should prepare the people for the change that must inevitably come, as we cannot expect wheat to remain at the present price. I ask the Honorary Minister to make further inquiries into the question through his scientific officers.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: I have done so.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Yes, with a negative result. I must refer now to the Fremantle Hospital. As members may know, I was for nearly 20 years a member of the board controlling the hospital, though I am not on it now, and I was surprised some weeks ago to learn that there have been serious misgivings in Fremantle with regard to the future of the institution. I am informed that it has been stated, unofficially, that the Health Department is reluctant to increase the accommodation at the hospital because it is believed that the site is unsuitable. I hope that information is incorrect, but there seems to be an impression among some of the departmental officers that the site is not satisfactory. Of course, we cannot expect the Government immediately to begin the construction of a new medical ward for women, though that work is long overdue, but I am alarmed at the rumour that no plans are being prepared and that the department is reluctant to make any provision for the future extension of the hospital. I would like the Minister to inquire into the matter.

A special committee was appointed, just before the war, to examine the position with regard to the Fremantle Hospital. Mr. Davidson, Town Planning Commissioner, and Mr. Clare, Principal Architect, were two of the expert members of the committee. They inspected the hospital and its surroundings. I need not point out that the pioneers of Fremantle made some tragic mistakes, one of which was the building of two schools in South-terrace with the Fremantle Hospital site a few yards further back. Owing to the position of the schools it is necessary to go up a side street to enter the hospital, and I believe that is the argument used against the enlargement of the institution. I was informed at the

time that the committee recommended long-term planning for the extension of the hospital.

It is generally recognised, by those who know anything about the matter, that the Fremantle Hospital could not be in a better position, though it is necessary to give it more room. The committee recommended the eventual removal of the infants' school and the boys' school, in order to give the hospital a frontage to South-terrace. A further recommendation was the removal of the old base hospital, in order further to extend the frontage so that the hospital authorities might with confidence look forward to the extension of the institution.

An immediate question, when the housing position eases, will be the building of a new women's medical ward, but more important still will be the need to erect a maternity hospital in the Fremantle district. Doctors have suggested to me that the Fremantle Hospital site is excellent, and at the back of it there is what is known as "Scotchman's Hill." We used to believe that land belonged to the hospital board, but later discovered that it was Crown land. I have been informed that that would be an ideal site for a maternity hospital. If it were built there, a saving would be effected in administrative costs, on the business side, because it could be administered from the general office of the Fremantle Hospital.

The old base hospital is now inhabited by several tenants, and its condition is such that, if it belonged to a private owner, the Fremantle City Council would have taken him to court years ago. There is no excuse for the way in which the department has neglected the building. The families living there pay rent, and for an expenditure of £50 or £60 the fences and so on could be put in order; giving the place a more decent appearance. The building, which is one of the oldest in Western Australia, could not be altered, but the approaches could be made more decent. At present it is a disgrace to the Government and to the department, and I would point out that the necessary work could be done in a few days by less than half a dozen men.

Despite the grumbling and complaints of people about the matter, nobody has taken any notice of it. In view of that, I think there is something in the suggestion contained in the Local Government Bill that Government property should be placed

under local authority supervision. There is no property in Fremantle which is in as bad a condition as the old base hospital and it is certainly a disgrace to the Government. The special committee which was appointed discovered, when inspecting the site, that the property adjoining the premises is owned by the Commonwealth Government. I would like to know how the Commonwealth Government was able to get hold of that land without the knowledge of the State authorities, although I am not blaming this Government for it. However, it is essential, in the interests of the future development of the Fremantle district, that approaches should be made to the Commonwealth Government for the State to take over that property. If that could be done we would be able to finalise a long range plan which would probably take 15 to 20 years to fulfil but it would be a great credit to the Government and would provide the best hospital site in the metropolitan area. I say that without fear or favour.

As soon as the people who live there are accommodated in other houses, the old base hospital must be demolished. I think the plan suggested by the committee should be endorsed and arrangements made so that there can be no argument in the future about alterations to the Fremantle Hospital. Two things are wanted urgently in the Fremantle district and they are the maternity hospital and a new medical ward for women. I am fully aware of the housing shortage and I know how futile it is to expect that the work could be proceeded with immediately; but it should be planned for the future, and I urgently request the Minister to give it serious consideration. I support the second reading of the Bill.

**HON. W. R. HALL** (North-East) [3.13]: I rise to support the Bill and in doing so I desire to bring a few matters before members. The first concerns the goldmining industry and the serious position in which we find it, today. Nothing in the wide world will ever shake my faith in the future of the goldmining industry in this State and in the prosperity which must be enjoyed by the industry in the not-too-distant future. I realise, however, that it would be hard to forecast just when that will be. I asked the Chief Secretary the other day questions regarding the industry and his replies indicated that there has been a serious decline in production on the Goldfields since 1942.

Costs have increased out of all proportion, and there has been, and still is, a serious shortage of labour. In 1941, 13,000 men were engaged in the industry and in 1948, 7,178 men were employed. That means that there were approximately 6,000 men less employed in 1948 than in 1941, and that is a serious position.

Combined with that factor, the tonnage, too, has dropped by almost half since the year 1940, which makes me realise that the industry is in a parlous condition. That fact was also mentioned by Mr. Heenan yesterday. These goldmines are in our own State and the Government of the day should use every effort to assist those that are not able to pay their way. I realise that the State Government is doing what it can, but everything possible should be done to assist the industry. I have no doubt that there are three or four mines on the Golden Mile that can produce, if they so desire, plenty of yellow metal. However, there are quite a few mines, too, not in that fortunate position and they are the mines which, I think, should be given assistance by the State Government as well as by the Commonwealth Government, if possible.

I read in the Press the other day a statement that the Commonwealth Government intends to increase the payments to those mines, but that is not going far enough. If the position of the goldmining industry is not given serious consideration by both the Federal authorities and the State Government, we shall find that it will react very badly on this State. I say that, without fear of contradiction. The time has arrived when restrictions should be lifted and the producers of gold permitted to sell their product on the open market, as they could in years gone by. That, I think, would overcome the position. The arrangement of receiving 35 dollars an ounce for gold is not enough. The ore being turned out by the larger mines today is sufficient to keep them going, but with the high cost of producing gold, the smaller mines cannot do so, with the result that labour is being lost to the industry. There is no need for me to remind members just how hard it is to obtain labour and keep it, and we are finding ourselves at a standstill as regards the opening up and development of new mines.

I listened very attentively yesterday to Mr. Heenan's remarks on prospecting

and to the assistance given to prospectors. I, too, consider that the 30s. a week paid by the State Government to prospectors is insufficient. That money is paid to those men to help them while they are trying to find new shows, which might eventually turn out as much gold as some of the mines on the Golden Mile. The monetary assistance should be increased in order to allow the men, who are more or less aged, to endeavour to locate new finds.

This is an occasion when I think I should bring before the House the question of water supplies for pensioners and prospectors at Broad Arrow, which is only 24 miles from Kalgoorlie. At present there are several prospectors and pensioners at that centre. Those men were obtaining free water until recently as a result of an arrangement with the Mines Department, but the water subsequently became unfit for drinking. After much dilly-dallying by the Mines and Water Supply Departments, the prospectors and pensioners are now obtaining suitable water but are paying 12s. 6d. per 1,000 gallons for it. Is that the way to assist prospectors? Those men must have water, and the least that can be done is to supply them with water free. I only hope that the Government will take notice of my remarks and that the position will revert to what it was previously.

I am sorry the Minister did not have a reply to the questions I asked yesterday regarding the Motor Vehicle Allocation Board, because there are one or two matters I wish to mention concerning it. Some time ago Parliament passed an Act granting the Government control of the distribution of cars of both English and North American origin. It did appear to me that shortly afterwards pressure was brought to bear by vested interests or by some other medium because the Government released the control, firstly, on the Holden car and then on all English cars, and I believe that today, irrespective of the horsepower, no English cars are under control.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: The release of both were simultaneous.

Hon. W. R. HALL: What difference does that make? One can obtain an English car today, if one desires to do so, and evidently it is not necessary to approach the Motor Vehicle Allocation Board for a release. When one is faced with this Supply Bill,

which is for a great deal of money, one wonders whether it is not a waste of money to have such a board operating. Unfortunately, I have not the figures as to what it is costing the State Government to have this board sitting and issuing permits for cars and utilities of North American origin only. If I am told the truth, and I believe I am, I understand that 24 Chevrolet cars will be issued this month and 24 Chevrolet utilities in August, and there will be no more Chevrolets until February, 1950. Cars of North American origin are Chevrolet, De Soto, Dodge and one or two others. Is it necessary for this board to continue when there are so few vehicles of North American origin entering the country?

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: The motor distributors could do the work as well, if not better.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I am of the same opinion as the hon. member. I know of persons on the Eastern Goldfields who made application for vehicles on a high priority, intending to use them for work on the Golden Mile or in centres 30 or 40 miles out of town, and they have been waiting for one or two years to have their permits granted. One can see ladies driving the latest American cars around Perth. What priority would they have?

Hon. E. H. Gray: Ladies' priority.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: They would be farmers' wives.

Hon. W. R. HALL: Yes, the Honorary Minister is probably correct. The majority of cars of North American origin have been allocated to farmers in this State. I have no quarrel with that, but I do not like to see those cars brought into the city for disposal. They purchase them for £700 or £800 and resell them for £1,000 or £1,250. For the board itself and the man in charge I have the greatest respect, but I feel that the board is not serving its true purpose, which is to issue permits for cars on the highest priority possible.

If I had the figures I am afraid I would discover that the Eastern Goldfields have been granted only about two per cent. of all the cars and utilities that have been brought into the country since the inception of the board. That is not good enough. The farmers may be sitting on top of the world at present, but a greater percentage of these cars and utilities should have found their way to the Goldfields and the surrounding districts where they are badly needed. In view of the few cars that will come under

the jurisdiction of this board in the near future, I consider it is not warranted and the money expended in maintaining it is a waste.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Of course it is.

Hon. W. R. HALL: The control could be handed to the motor firms themselves to administer, and actually they are doing that at present behind the scenes. To go through all the applications made for these cars and investigate them for the purpose of issuing permits for releases, one would require a staff as large as that of the State's Police Force. Another matter which came under my notice as a result of questions asked of the Chief Secretary during the week was the condition of the Great Eastern-highway between Bulla Bulling, which is 40 miles this side of Kalgoorlie, and Southern Cross. I think nearly every Goldfields member has been over that road and knows what it is like. When moving the adoption of the Address-in-reply in 1938, I stated that I considered if steps were not taken to have this road bituminised at once, it would be 10 years before it was finished and there would be aeroplane services operating daily between Perth and Kalgoorlie. My prediction has now come to pass.

Hon. E. M. Davies: You were a good prophet!

Hon. W. R. HALL: We find today that there are approximately 90 miles of that road still not bituminised.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Why did not your Government get on to it?

Hon. W. R. HALL: I did impress the the condition of this road upon the Labour Government. Had the hon. member listened to me when I have spoken, he would have known that I have raised the same question time after time. I know the province that Mr. Mann represents, and I am well aware that his roads are all bituminised.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Not all of them.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I know, because I have been down there with the hon. member himself.

Hon. W. J. Mann: I took you over the good ones.

Hon. W. R. HALL: That is what the hon. member does to an unsophisticated Goldfields member! We know that the main road to his constituency is bituminised; the main highway through to Albany is bituminised, and so is the road to Geraldton. On the other hand, the main highway to

the Eastern Goldfields, which is the portion of Western Australia that made the State in the past, is not in that fortunate position and at least 90 miles of it is in a bad state of disrepair. You, Mr. President, know that I travel over that road very frequently and am in a position to say what condition it is in. The other day I asked the Minister a question about the highway and he said he did not know that at least 70 miles of it was badly corrugated. He would not know; he does not travel over it.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : He goes by train.

Hon. W. R. HALL : The Minister does not always go by train. In fact, he does not often visit Kalgoorlie, although I think he should do so. He could possibly give a filip to the Goldfields if he were there a little more regularly. I wish the Chief Secretary were present because I do not like saying anything about him in his absence. In view of the Honorary Minister's interjection, I had no option but to take note of it.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : The Minister will read your remarks.

Hon. W. R. HALL : I hope he will read every word of them. If he does so, I suggest that he should get a Government car and go over the road to see it for himself.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt : You should take him with you.

Hon. W. R. HALL : That would be better : I would like to do so. I am sure I could point out to him what is necessary.

Hon. E. M. Davies : You could give him a rough ride, too !

Hon. W. R. HALL : I do not suppose the present Government will be in office much longer and I hope a Labour Government will be returned to power at the next election. Should I be rather optimistic in that respect and do not prove to be a good judge, I trust the Honorary Minister will be able to give me an assurance, on behalf of the Government, that the portion of the highway I refer to will be put into a proper state of repair so that motorists will be saved a lot of trouble and much extra expense.

Another department about which I have to complain is the State Housing Commission. To my way of thinking, some of the Government departments are employing too many officers altogether. The services they give in return for their salaries are very little as compared with what is required of

them. When the ordinary individual goes to the State Housing Commission to secure some information, he finds he has to queue up for hours on end, and he should not be put to so much trouble. Too many individuals have had that experience. The cost of the Commission to the Government must represent a large amount and, in my opinion, we have gone far beyond the time when people should be required to queue up there. This queueing-up gets my goat ! It was all very well in wartime, but the practice should not be necessary now.

The Commission is very slow indeed in its dealings with the general public with regard to the issuing of building permits. I had a case the other day where a person residing on the Goldfields put in an application for materials necessary in order to enable him to renovate his house so that he could continue living in it. The premises were on the verge of being condemned as unfit for human habitation, and he had to undertake the work. It was not until six months after he had submitted his application that anything was done. The matter was referred to me and when I rang the Commission up, one of the officers who dealt with the matter said that he had just sent the papers through to the typist and that the permit had been issued. I will not mention a large number of such instances because there are many of them.

In my opinion, the control over building permits should be lifted entirely with respect to the country districts. What chance have the people on the Eastern Goldfields of securing building materials after those in the metropolitan area have had their requirements fulfilled ? Then there is difficulty from the railway standpoint, and that is quite irrespective of the current strike. The St. John Ambulance people at Kalgoorlie have been waiting for months for the transport by rail of materials necessary for the construction of a garage, for which a permit has been granted. I have a letter that sets out that for the past three months the necessary timber has been awaiting despatch at the mill, but lack of railway transport has made it impossible to forward the supply. What a nice thing that is for the ambulance which has served, and is still doing so, the interests of the people of the Goldfields so well for so long.

There is something radically wrong about the whole set-up. I do not suggest that the Government is altogether to blame, but this

is the only opportunity I have to bring such matters before Parliament and before the Government itself. I certainly hope some notice will be taken of the complaints that have been raised and that the Government will endeavour to rectify them. I trust that St. John Ambulance Association and other Goldfields bodies that have found themselves in a similar position, will get better service in the future than they have had in the past. I am in a position to know that not much service has been rendered. Then again, during the many years I was chairman of the Kalgoorlie Road Board, I had opportunities to peruse correspondence that was received by the board.

As members are aware, the secretaries of local governing authorities in the country districts are the representatives of the State Housing Commission, and from time to time they are asked to inspect and report upon certain buildings. The secretary of the Kalgoorlie Road Board undertook those duties in an honorary capacity and yet on not one, but on quite a number of occasions he received a request from the State Housing Commission to inspect and report upon certain premises and then two months later another request was received by him to inspect and report on the same property. There must be something wrong with the Commission's files or its filing system, or else some officer badly needs to be educated to a higher standard in respect of the work he is supposed to carry out. There is much more that I could discuss, but I do not propose to weary the House any further. I shall content myself with supporting the Bill.

**HON. E. M. DAVIES (West)** [3.40]: I support the second reading, realising that the Government, in order to function, must be granted Supply to carry on the affairs of the State until such time as the Estimates are passed. With other members, I am taking this opportunity to bring before the notice of the Government criticism of various activities of departments. For the benefit of the people generally of any country or nation, it is necessary that they should have, firstly, a reasonable standard of living; secondly, reasonable housing conditions, and thirdly, reasonable hospital facilities. When we consider those necessities, it is quite apparent that a lot of them are not being made available at present.

In my province, which includes Fremantle and the contiguous districts, the housing position is worse than it has ever been. Some time ago, the attention of the Government was drawn to the fact that not one house under the Commonwealth-State rental scheme had been completed at Fremantle. After considerable delay, contracts were let, but some of those homes took quite a long time to erect. There is still a very great shortage of housing in the Fremantle area. Inquiries made by me recently elicited that there were 17 families under eviction orders to leave their homes between now and September, and the State Housing Commission informed me that there was no possible chance of accommodation being provided for them.

**Hon. G. Fraser**: Not even in those camps where the Minister said provision was being made for Fremantle applicants.

**Hon. E. M. DAVIES**: Last Monday a gentleman came to me in great distress and asked me to leave a meeting I was attending in the Fremantle Town Hall in order to speak to him. He had received a notification from the bailiff that he was to be put out of his home at noon on the following Wednesday. He is a married man with a wife and nine children. The house had been bought over his head, and he had made application to the tenancy section of the Housing Commission. In accordance with the regulations, he was taken to court and given three months' notice. The man was unable to obtain any other accommodation. The time having expired, he was told that he would be taken to court, and he assumed that he would be able to present his case and explain his difficulties to the magistrate. That, however, did not eventuate. A warrant was issued for his eviction and he was given one and a half days to vacate the premises.

I accompanied that man to the State Housing Commission. I wish to be quite fair by saying that, while there might be criticism of some of the officials, I have received all possible courtesy from those who are endeavouring to deal with this difficult problem. The Assistant Secretary took up the case, and the magistrate agreed to withhold the warrant pending the man's appearance before the court next Wednesday, when the case will be reheard. I mention this to illustrate the difficulties being experienced at Fremantle. People are under eviction orders and there is no accommodation available for them.

I could quote quite a number of cases particularly relating to small-unit families. There are four-unit and more than four-unit families who are obliged to occupy the only accommodation they can get, and that is on a verandah exposed to the elements. Efforts have been made to bring these facts before the Housing Commission and we have been informed that there is no chance at all of anything being done for those people. Unfortunately, at the moment, it is impossible to obtain even a flat in the Army camps. Some of those flats are being renovated and relined, but at least two months will elapse before any is available.

The present Government, when on the hustings, told the people that it would build homes for two- and three-unit families, and I have no doubt that many such families, who were in desperate need of homes at the time, thought that something would be done for them. However, the promises made have not materialised, except to a very small degree. Recently I obtained some information compiled by the Housing Commission regarding small-unit accommodation. This will give an idea of the treatment that has been meted out to the West Province. The figures are—

	Under Construction			Completed.			Total Units.
	Ex-pans.	Dup-lex.	Flats.	Ex-pans.	Dup-lex.	Flats.	
South Perth	47	36	14	2	2	....	101
Belmont	30	2	....	6	2	....	40
Manning Es- tate	17	28	....	....	....	....	45
Claremont	6	22	....	....	....	....	28
Baywater	6	....	....	....	....	....	4
Hilton Park	2	....	....	....	....	....	2
White Gum Valley	3	4	....	....	....	....	7

Hilton Park and White Gum Valley are two districts in West Province, and the total of the units under construction for them is nine. We must take into consideration the fact that the population of the province, particularly of Fremantle and the surrounding districts, is very large. The small number of homes being made available there is not giving the West Province, and Fremantle particularly, a fair deal at all. Unless something is done very soon the housing position will become so acute that possibly the people there will adopt some other method of securing the homes they so urgently need.

One finds, when bringing these matters before the State Housing Commission, that the only information one can get is that

accommodation is not available and that the people must try to continue to live under their present conditions. Those conditions at Fremantle are deplorable, as Fremantle and the district surrounding it are greatly industrialised. In fact, a new industrial area has been created and the many people who are coming to Fremantle to work in the industries established there find it impossible to secure homes. The Government must take that fact into consideration. Something must be done in the very near future to alleviate the distress of the people in the localities I have mentioned.

Housing is only one of the problems to be dealt with, and I now wish to say a few words on the question of facilities for the hospitalisation of the people in my district. Mr. Gray has already dealt with this question. He pointed out that a committee was formed to consider the problem and advise the Medical Department on what was necessary for the hospitalisation of the people not only of Fremantle, but of a district extending from Rockingham to, possibly, Claremont. Conditions today are such that it is only by a stroke of good luck that wards in the Fremantle Hospital have not been closed within the past few weeks.

The position had become so desperate that a deputation from those at present in charge of the hospital affairs waited on the Minister, the Commissioner of Public Health, the Perth Hospital Board and the Under Secretary for Health in an endeavour to find some way of keeping those wards open. I give the Commissioner of Public Health credit for trying to obtain sufficient doctors to run the hospital. We found we could secure one doctor to assist the acting medical superintendent. He said, quite fairly, that if it were not possible to obtain other medical assistance he could not continue in the position, as it was absolutely impossible for him to carry on the hospital himself. The Children's Hospital cooperated by making a doctor available on a 24-hour service from Monday to Friday, but that left the hospital with only one doctor to do the work over the week-end. Consequently, the acting medical superintendent has found it difficult to take a week-end off.

The Royal Perth Hospital Board was absolutely non-cooperative. I understand the number of doctors required for that hospital is about 28 and I believe it has 23. The Fremantle Hospital is a 200-bed hospital, with 196 beds and an average of 164

patients. The deputation found that the Royal Perth Hospital Board was not prepared to assist in the way that the Children's Hospital did. The position looked very black indeed and, as I said, there was a possibility that some of the wards at the Fremantle Hospital would have to be closed. I understand certain recommendations were made by this committee as to what should be done to bring the hospital up to date. Of course, it was not expected that a building programme which would fulfil all the desires of the committee could be put into operation at once.

The buildings envisaged would cost in the vicinity of £250,000, which would be expended over a considerable number of years; but many improvements could have been effected to the hospital. For some reason or other, possibly because of dilatoriness in the various departments, nothing seems to be made available for the Fremantle Hospital. Today we have 50 per cent. of the doctors required, namely three, and they are being asked to conduct an institution which provides hospitalisation for the people living in the districts I have enumerated. The reason appears to be that doctors will not come to Fremantle if they get the opportunity of securing positions at the new Royal Perth Hospital.

That, coupled with the fact that the facilities and amenities at Fremantle are not what they should be, induces the doctors to seek a position in some other institution where those facilities and amenities are available. Hence there appears to be no proper cooperation between the various hospitals to provide a medical staff for the Fremantle Hospital. If this hospital were to close certain wards, then the responsibility for looking after the patients who would have occupied them will be thrust on the Royal Perth Hospital. Therefore, one would imagine that the Royal Perth Hospital Board would have gone out of its way to assist the Fremantle Hospital to carry on.

I have said that there are three doctors at the hospital and that three more are required. Doctor J. M. Drew was engaged in London, through the Medical Department, for the Fremantle Hospital. I understand he will be leaving the United Kingdom shortly to take up his duties there as medical superintendent. I am afraid, however, that when he arrives and finds the conditions that exist and the small staff he will have to assist him, he may possibly not take up the appointment.

Hon. G. Fraser: That is happening under a Government that put cobwebs on a tuppenny-ha'penny private hospital.

*Sitting suspended from 4 to 4.20 p.m.*

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: The reason for my fears is that an appointment of a person from England to another position at the hospital was made; but after seeing the conditions, the person concerned was not prepared to accept the job. I mention these facts to indicate that unless something is done to improve the conditions under which the doctors and staff have to work, the possibility is that the hospital will have to close some of its wards. We certainly trust that ways and means will be found to prevent that happening.

I would like to draw attention to some of the difficulties with which those who are endeavouring to administer the hospital's affairs have had to contend in the past. With regard to patients' radio-pillowphones, finance was arranged in the middle of May, 1948, but installation has not yet commenced. The hospital was advised on the 4th July of this year that the Tender Board had accepted a tender and that work would commence as soon as possible. Nothing has been done in that regard. Concerning the blood bank, late in January, 1948, the Commissioner of Public Health was requested to inspect working conditions in the dispensary and blood bank, as the chief pharmacist had refused to accept responsibility for any accident which might occur in the preparation of sterile solutions. These alterations were commenced a little over four weeks ago, another considerable delay having taken place in that regard.

In connection with general hospital maintenance, the Department of Public Health was requested late in April, 1948, to authorise the Public Works Department to submit a report on the total cost of renovating the hospital. Further reminders were sent in June, 1948, and again on the 11th March, 1949. Replies have not yet been received. In February, 1949, the department was requested to have some action taken to air-condition the theatre block. On the 13th June, 1949, the Medical Department advised that, owing to pressure of work, the Principal Architect had been unable to give this matter attention but had been asked to give the request special consideration. On the 8th February the hospital requested the

department to authorise expenditure in carrying out urgently required improvements to the junior nurses home. No report has yet been received.

At the March meeting of the Fremantle Hospital Board it was decided to request the Department of Public Health to erect separate R.M.O.'s. quarters in the hospital grounds, to accommodate both male and female doctors. The request had been forwarded to the Medical Department on the 28th March, 1949, and on the 4th April the department replied that, as the Principal Architect at the present time had so much work on hand, it would not be much use drawing plans of another building and therefore suggested that the matter be left in abeyance for some months. This is most important. We find, as I have already stated, that we are unable to obtain medical staff because of the lack of facilities, and we thought that the building of quarters might be an inducement to doctors to accept appointments at the hospital.

Since the 30th July, 1948, the hospital has been without the services of a salaried physiotherapist. The Medical Department, on behalf of the hospital, advertised in the Old Country. As a result, Miss D. Cooper was allotted to the hospital. Miss Cooper called there on the 1st June, and after being shown by the Acting Medical Superintendent the conditions under which she would have to work, she requested a few days to think things over as she was not at all favourably impressed with the conditions of the physiotherapy department. Later Miss Cooper telephoned the hospital stating that she would not accept the vacancy. With regard to nurses' quarters, on the 31st March the Department of Public Health was advised that to accommodate comfortably the present nursing staff, 49 additional bedrooms would be required, and with the introduction of a 40-hour week, 76 additional bedrooms would be required. No word has been received by the hospital on this matter.

The Fremantle Hospital is regarded as a 200-bed hospital. The average number of beds occupied is 164, and at present we have three doctors endeavouring to look after the patients. The hospital has 196 beds, 64 of which are on the verandah, which is not conducive to the best interests of the patients. Yet nothing can be done in that regard. I would appreciate it very much if the Minister concerned would take every

step possible to see whether some of these serious difficulties can be remedied. The Fremantle Hospital is an institution which has to provide hospitalisation for quite a large number of people; and if some of the wards have to be closed as a result of the shortage of doctors because men will not take appointments there on account of the fact that they can get better conditions elsewhere, the whole responsibility will possibly fall on the Royal Perth Hospital.

I trust that the Government will endeavour to do something to try to bring about an alteration in the conditions. Recently I asked a question regarding the installation of an auxiliary plant, and this is the reply I received:—

There has been no delay in the installation of this 80 h.p. plant which was not available for testing and delivery until the 3rd June, 1949. Immediate steps were taken to procure the materials for permanent foundations and housing, and it is expected that the machine will be installed about the 8th July, 1949.

I do not desire to be misunderstood in any way if I appear to doubt the Minister's veracity in giving the reply, but I say that the information given to him does not indicate the true position. The option on this plant was obtained on the 11th February of this year, and it was in the hands of the Public Works Department on the 17th February. Finance was arranged on the 25th February, and inquiries were made by the Tender Board on the 23rd March, but they then knew nothing about the question. On the 28th March, a Public Works Department officer called with regard to the site. On the 24th April, blueprints came to hand, and on the 4th May, an officer called with a plan for the housing of the plant. On the 20th May, an order was received for its installation, and then the work went on fairly quickly.

I have no particular grouse with those charged with the responsibility of installing the plant, but I do say there has been quite a considerable delay in making arrangements for the installation of the plant in view of its great importance. I feel that the dilatoriness of some of the departments concerned with hospital administration is something which should be taken into consideration and inquiries made to see why these matters cannot be dealt with more speedily. The question of the administration of the hospital today is one in which I am peculiarly interested. The hospital did have an advisory board consisting of 12

persons who were nominated by various interests in the district. They went out of office last January by the effluxion of time. I do not know exactly what the position is today. The Minister has not re-appointed the board, but has asked the executive to carry on the administration of the hospital until such time as the department makes up its mind what it intends to do.

Hon. G. Fraser: Who actually is on the hospital board now?

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: I cannot say what the designation might be, but I can tell the hon. member that the executive comprises: Mr. Wauhop, nominated by the East Fremantle Council; Mr. Priest, who is the treasurer, nominated by the friendly societies movement; Mr. J. R. N. Green-slade, representing the Public Health Department; Dr. Cook, nominated by the honorary medical staff; and myself, nominated by the Fremantle City Council. We do not know what our legal standing is, or even whether we have any. However, we have endeavoured to do our best. I am sure the time has arrived when the Minister concerned should make up his mind what he intends to do about the administration of the hospital.

Hon. G. Fraser: You are actually the executive of a body that does not exist.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: I do not know exactly what the designation is. The only authority we have is a letter from the Minister asking the executive to carry on. I do not know what the Minister intends to do, but I think the time has arrived when a definite statement should be made as to what is the actual position.

I feel somewhat concerned about the question of materials or permits since the Government decided to lift the controls on certain materials which, to my mind, is a farce, because it enables certain people to scrounge materials for work that might not be considered necessary. One notices brick fences and granolithic verandahs are being constructed, while, at the same time, it is utterly impossible for bricks to be obtained for housing. In Fremantle, orders have been served, under the Health Act, on eating houses requiring them to make improvements, alterations and renovations. Some of the work has been held up for a considerable time because no bricks have been available. Yet we find that people are able to get them for use on work that could be left until supplies were more plentiful.

When people require these things for essential uses, and cannot get them, it naturally makes them very discontented, particularly when they see others obtaining them for works that could be delayed. The Government could do something in that regard. I know of one chap who is desirous of building himself a home under the self-help scheme. He has obtained, quite legally, a lot of material. Where he got it, I do not know. He feels he has sufficient to start his home, but, because the Government has lifted controls while still retaining the permit system for building, it means that the State Housing Commission will not grant him a permit because it is not his turn to receive one. The result is that all his material is lying idle, as it cannot be used by anybody else. I do not think that is fair, and it is something that should receive the attention of the Government. That sort of thing is causing a great deal of discontent among the people generally.

Another point I would like to refer to concerns the Land Sales Control Act, which, to my mind, is a farce. I venture to say that the majority of sales of improved property take place on the black market. I have not had a great deal of experience in this class of business, but I was asked by a friend, who was temporarily out of the State, to inspect a house that was advertised for sale, because he desired to purchase it. The price asked was £2,000 and, like many other improved properties offered for sale, it was a furnished house. People are using this particular method to override the Act. I found that whilst the property was a brick house, it was many years old and originally might have cost in the vicinity of £700 to £800 to build. The furniture in it was worth no more than about £60.

That is what is going on today. People are in desperate need of homes, and they are prepared to fall for any blackmarketing. In this particular case, £2,000 was being asked for the house, and I suppose its reasonable value would be in the vicinity of £1,200. I think the average person would be prepared to pay that amount. To ask £2,000, and say the house was furnished, was to demand something for which there was practically no value at all, assuming that the furniture was worth about £60.

Hon. H. K. Watson: We had the same position with vacant land until we lifted control.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES : That might have been so as regards vacant land because there is no shortage of it, but there is an acute shortage of homes. There is any amount of vacant land in this State that can be purchased, but there are insufficient houses for the people. Some method should be adopted whereby these black market sales can be traced and action taken to protect people who are in desperate circumstances.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt : A Select Committee to deal with this situation was appointed last night.

Hon. G. Fraser : We do not know what happens in another place.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham : The hon. member knows everything that suits him.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt : I read it in the Press this morning.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES : I am afraid I do not know what happens in the other Chamber. The condition of the railway locomotive shed at Fremantle has been brought under my notice and I understand that the roof is in very bad repair. During inclement weather, the mechanical staff and the running staff have to carry out their duties in that shed and very often they are obliged to work in water. Whilst I realise that the material supply position is acute, I believe that the asbestos which would be required for the roofing could be purchased. I hope that the responsible department will ensure that something is done and the position remedied. It is most inconvenient for the men working there and they should not be forced to labour under such conditions.

During the course of his speech, Mr. Gray referred to a place known as Base Flats. I have been interested in this establishment, and I asked the health inspector of the Fremantle City Council to make an inspection and put up a report. I was dealing principally with the exterior portion of the building and not the interior or structural work, because I realise that to spend money in that regard would be financially unwise. It is the responsibility of the Government to see that the fences, which are almost falling down on the frontage to South-terrace and also at the entrance to a popular hall, are repaired. The fence on the South-terrace frontage is built on a stone retaining wall and, in my opinion, it could be removed and portions of it used to repair the fence near the entrance to the

hall. On the 13th May last I wrote to the Under Secretary for Works including a copy of the health inspector's report, in the hope that something would be done to make the place look a little more presentable. As yet, I have not even had the courtesy of a reply, let alone anything being done to remedy the position.

Hon. G. Fraser : That is after two months !

Hon. E. M. DAVIES : I am under the impression that certain people are taking advantage of the predicament of citizens as regards lighting facilities, during the black-out conditions which have been brought about as a result of the cessation of work in the coalmining industry. I am sure that the State Price Fixing Act is not being complied with and some inquiries should be made to ascertain why lamps, candles and oil fuel are costing so much. Recently, I was obliged to try to find some means of lighting and I had to purchase a lamp. It was manufactured out of tin and had a glass chimney which was about three or four sizes too small for the burner. I was obliged to pay 9s. 3d. for it, which, in my opinion, was exorbitant. I consider that certain people are taking advantage of the conditions and something should be done to protect the public. Candles are another item in short supply, and one must pay 7d. for a candle. Some years ago, it was possible to buy a packet of six candles for the same price.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham : Is that 7d. each ?

Hon. E. M. DAVIES : Yes. Fuel for lamps is also being sold at a high price. I consider that the Act, for which the State Government is responsible, is being flouted, and some effort should be made to take action to protect the public who are compelled to use the facilities I have mentioned.

I want again to impress upon the Minister the necessity of endeavouring to have something done about the Fremantle Hospital. I am somewhat fearful that if conditions in that institution do not improve we will find our medical staff depleted and it may be necessary to close some of the wards of the hospital. I trust that what I have said today will not fall upon deaf ears, and that the Minister concerned will take action to see that some of the requests are attended to so that we shall have better conditions in the hospital. Then it will be possible to have a staff which we can retain

and it will provide a hospitalisation scheme for the people of that district. I support the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by Hon. G. Fraser, debate adjourned.

### ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2.15 p.m. on Tuesday, the 19th July.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 4.48 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 14th July, 1949.

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

## QUESTIONS.

### IRON AND STEEL.

(a) *As to Shortage of Supplies and Export.*

Hon. J. T. TONKIN asked the Minister representing the Honorary Minister for Supply and Shipping :

(1) Is bar iron and steel in very short supply in Western Australia ?

(2) Is he aware that arrangements have been made to ship from Fremantle a considerable quantity of bar iron and steel for use in the Eastern States ?

(3) Is the large profit which will be derived from this business deal the reason why this State is to be deprived of much-needed material ?

(4) Will he take immediate action in an endeavour to have the iron and steel kept in Western Australia ?

The PREMIER replied :

(1) Yes.

(2) No.

(3) and (4) If the hon. member will furnish me with particulars of the exports he has in mind, inquiries will be made, although there is no power to control transactions in iron and steel from Western Australia.

(b) *As to Firms Intending to Export.*

Hon. J. T. TONKIN (without notice) asked the Premier :

Arising out of those answers, I now desire to ask him if he will have inquiries made of International Harvesters, Ltd., and H. V. McKay, Ltd., and if so, ascertain whether these firms intend to export this iron and steel ? If this is so, will he use every endeavour to have this much needed material kept in Western Australia ?

The PREMIER replied :

I told the member for North-East Fremantle that if he could furnish me with particulars as to where this steel is and who is exporting it I would have inquiries made. I can only repeat that if those particulars are supplied I will have the necessary inquiries carried out.