

HON. F. J. S. WISE: I think it necessary to qualify the position as regards what is traditional and what is right and proper in connection with debates on Supply Bills. The Premier almost became testy in his criticism of members presuming or daring to speak on the Supply Bill. So did King Charles.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: They chopped his head off!

Mr. Bovell: Shame!

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: This tradition, this habit, this practice, this right and this necessity have been handed down through the Parliaments of the ages because of King Charles in his attitude to Parliament, forcing Parliament to examine the accounts before it approved of his spending. For centuries it has been recognised as a necessity, if Parliament and the Committees of Parliament so wish, that debate shall ensue before Supply is granted. That has been the acknowledged right, custom and tradition for centuries. The Committee in debating the Bill this evening has done no other than exercise its right. It has been the right in every Parliament in Australia—and in every Parliament in the British Empire where the mother of Parliaments, the House of Commons, has handed down a constitution—to ventilate grievances before Supply is granted.

So, it is not a bit of use taking objection to such a procedure. It has been traditional for centuries, it has been recognised as a right and it is not uncommon practice in the other Parliaments of Australia. Throughout all the Houses of Parliament in Australia it is recognised that before Supply is granted members should have an opportunity to ventilate their grievances. I wanted to make the position clear before the Bill was passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

First and Second Readings.

In accordance with the foregoing resolutions, Bill introduced and read a first and second time without debate.

As to Committee Stage.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. C. McLarty—Murray-Wellington) [1.12]: I move—

That Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair for the purpose of considering the Bill in Committee.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [1.13]: I think it is too late in the morning for you, Mr. Speaker, to leave the Chair and for the House to consider this Bill in Committee. Why cannot we go home and deal with it in reasonable hours? We have been here since 4.30 p.m. yesterday and why the Premier should wish to push on with the Bill now when we can finish it this afternoon I do not know. One does not know what might take place in the Committee stage this afternoon. As an amendment, I move—

That the Bill be considered in Committee this afternoon.

Hon. A. H. Pantong: You cannot do that; it is private members' day.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: Seeing that the member for Leederville has raised that point and as I am not prepared to jeopardise the business of private members, I will withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Question put and passed.

In Committee, etc.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

House adjourned at 1.17 a.m. (Wednesday).

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 13th July, 1949.

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

BILL—TUBERCULOSIS (COMMON-WEALTH AND STATE ARRANGEMENT).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South) [2.25]: I intend to support the second reading. I am glad to find that increased interest is being taken in measures to detect and treat tuberculosis and that a clinic has been set up in Murray-street for conducting examinations. The clinic, according to reports I have received, is performing a good service. A few days ago I paid a visit in order to learn of the system being adopted and the length of time required to x-ray a person to determine whether he was infected with the disease. When a person calls for examination, he is attended to immediately and the examination is completed within 10 minutes. This is a wonderful service, and I hope that the work will be widely advertised so that people will not be neglectful of undergoing a check-up in this way.

Anyone who comes from the centre of the goldmining industry knows something of the dreadful ravages of this disease, and yet for so many years no check was made to ascertain its prevalence. A month or so ago Dr. Robson, an expert on aluminium therapy treatment, delivered a series of public addresses at Kalgoorlie, Boulder, and Norseman. At Norseman there was a very large attendance and everybody was interested in what the doctor had to say. The same can be said of the meetings at Kalgoorlie and Boulder. Dr. Robson displayed pictures to illustrate his remarks, and those present welcomed his address as something calculated to bring about healthier conditions in the community.

To ensure the best results, we need the assistance of the mining companies, who should introduce this system of treatment into the change-rooms on the mines. If the system were installed there, as advocated by Dr. Robson, I believe that the incidence of the disease would be reduced to a minimum. In a matter of 20 minutes, a miner going underground or coming off shift could inhale the aluminium dust. Anything that the Government can do to lower the incidence of tuberculosis would be a step in the right direction, and I hope efforts will be made

to get all sections of people to undergo examination so that if the disease is found to be present, they may undergo treatment.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (East)

[2.29]: After having read the agreement carefully, it appears to me that the only advantage the State will obtain is that the cost of any additions or alterations in the method of treating people or ascertaining those who have contracted tuberculosis will be met by the Commonwealth Government, provided it agrees.

I have been informed—whether my information is correct or not I cannot say—that a 35 mm. film is used to take photographs of chests of people who are examined, and I understand that it is somewhat difficult to determine, when the film is screened, whether there are any defects in the lung. The Royal Perth Hospital, which, of course, is run by the State, uses a bigger plate for photographing the lungs, but I believe that the Commonwealth Government will not pay for the work done by the bigger machine. If that be so, and if this work is to be done—it is very necessary—then we ought to have the best possible means of ascertaining whether people are suffering from this disease. The Bill is a step in the right direction.

During the last few years we have been able to extend the life of man by medical and surgical treatment, particularly by the methods adopted to ascertain the health conditions of the people. Two of the most dreaded diseases today are tuberculosis and cancer, and we should do all we possibly can by research to ascertain the causes of these diseases and the remedy to be applied. It is also highly desirable that we should be able to diagnose these diseases in their early stages. Perhaps the Minister may be able to tell us about the system used in the Royal Perth Hospital and also the system used in the clinic in Murray-street where persons can have their chests examined.

I hope the Commonwealth Government will be generous in this matter. I still think it is not wise for a State such as Western Australia to be under the thumb of medical officers so far removed from us as Canberra is. If we could have more freedom, I believe we could deal with these cases better here than they could be dealt with by a system of centralised control which

will be brought about if the agreement is adopted. I presume the Government has given serious consideration to the measure. The Chief Secretary, when introducing it, commended it to the House; and after all, his knowledge of the subject is greater than mine. I am prepared to support the second reading.

HON. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM (South) [2.33]: I support the principle of the Bill, as I would support any measure brought in to control T.B. in any of its forms; but despite the fact that every right-thinking person would support legislation of this type, we have much to give us cause for thought. In my opinion, the Bill is not clear. It has been explained to some extent by the Chief Secretary; but, so far as I can see, it is only designed to come to some arrangement with the Commonwealth for research in connection with this disease.

If we pass the measure, we shall receive certain considerations from the Commonwealth, but what gives me grave concern is what we are to give for that assistance from the Commonwealth. I cannot help but think that our own medical officer would, to an extent, become a Commonwealth employee. Dr. Cook is the medical officer I have in mind and I think he would be forced to act in accordance with the wishes of his new boss, the Commonwealth Government, and consequently we in this State would lose much of the freedom of action we now enjoy in our own research centres. The State at present has an enviable reputation for research into T.B.

Many people are inclined to confuse T.B. with silicosis. True, our silicotic treatment centres are doing an excellent job. Aluminium therapy has been mentioned but, as we should know, it is of no use whatever in T.B. Any such treatment that may be introduced into Australia will benefit only those sufferers from silicosis who are in industrial areas, such as the Goldfields. There may be reason for people suffering from this disease to have some hope that something of this nature will benefit them. A person suffering from silicosis, while not necessarily a victim of T.B., is liable on account of his silicotic condition to become susceptible to T.B. also; and when persons are in that state then only can they benefit by the installation of T.B. research centres.

As has been mentioned by a Goldfields member of this Chamber, we Goldfields representatives feel grave concern about the onslaught of this disease in the State. The Commonwealth Government, however, is viewing the subject from a Commonwealth standpoint, whereas we on the Goldfields are more concerned with those who have contracted silicosis through their employment there. If the Commonwealth Government succeeds in its free medicine legislation, there is a danger, if the Bill be passed, of our freedom of action in Western Australia being restricted. I cannot help but feel that in those circumstances the Commonwealth Government will demand, in return for its assistance to the State, a far greater measure of control over matters which come under our jurisdiction. I feel it could be used as a powerful lever to force us to fall into step with the Commonwealth's present policy of slowly encroaching on controls exercised by the States.

I am worried over the fact that, unless the Bill is made more explicit, we shall be giving up our own powers to deal with these matters, and I point out that our record stands on its own. Wonderful success has been achieved at all chest clinics and inquiry centres. If the Bill gave Western Australia control and the financial assistance that is needed, we could have no hesitation whatever in agreeing to it. I am not in any way opposed to the Bill on the ground that it is intended to launch a big campaign of research and cure, provided that we do not have to give up our own right to establish clinics where we think fit and where they will do the most good, and provided the measure is not used in future to force our hands in respect to some further encroachment of Commonwealth control.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [2.41]: I would not have taken part in the debate except for the doubts expressed by one or two members as to what this Bill will do. For the life of me, I cannot read into it some of the suggestions that have been submitted. The members making them may be right and I may be wrong, but my interpretation is that the Bill will not interfere in any shape or form with any action the State Health Department may desire to take in relation to this disease. All the Bill sets out to do is to provide that the Common-

wealth shall, after a certain date, meet the expenditure involved in action taken by the State.

Hon. L. Craig: Approved expenditure.

Hon. G. FRASER: Approved expenditure so far as one particular section is concerned. If members will read Clause 5 of the schedule, they will see that it runs as follows:—

In order to enable the Minister—that means, the Commonwealth Minister—to determine whether any of the expenditure mentioned in Clause 2 of this Arrangement should be approved by him, the State shall ensure that—

(a) any proposal which will involve the reimbursement of capital expenditure under paragraph (a) of Clause 2 of this Arrangement . . .

There is no need to read any further; but paragraph (a) of Clause 2 reads—

(a) capital expenditure by the State on or after the first day of July, one thousand nine hundred and forty-eight, in the provision by the State of land and buildings for use in the diagnosis, treatment and control of tuberculosis and in the erection and improvement of buildings and the provisions of furnishings, equipment and plant for such use;

Those are the things for which the State would have to obtain authority, but only so far as qualifying it for reimbursements is concerned. It does not prevent the State from making such capital expenditure as it desires.

Hon. L. Craig: We would not get reimbursement for that.

Hon. G. FRASER: Members were speaking of powers being taken away from the State, but the Bill does not take any powers away from the State. All it provides is that if the State indulges in capital expenditure, it is left to the Commonwealth Minister to say whether the Commonwealth shall pay or not.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: And have two systems in operation.

Hon. G. FRASER: What does that matter, so long as we get the job done? We can argue about payment afterwards. I can see nothing in the Bill taking away any powers from the State, but I can see a lot that will mean a good deal of Commonwealth capital coming into the State to enable us to elaborate on the methods adopted in the past in attacking this disease. The only point involved is that we will be able to

extend our investigations into this disease—and God knows we need to do so. I was hoping that now that the State has a chest clinic in operation, one of the next moves would be to have compulsory x-ray examinations. I have a fear that many people who suspect that they are suffering from tuberculosis are afraid of presenting themselves for examination because they may be told of their condition. If examination were made compulsory, quite a lot of folk would be saved many years of suffering.

I can speak very feelingly in this regard, having had quite a lot of association with the subject. I am hoping that a move will be made in the not very distant future to make examinations compulsory because the longer people refrain from being examined, the less chance will there be of their having the disease arrested and so being given a longer period in which to enjoy life than would otherwise be the case. I hope the Bill will be passed. I repeat that I have no fear that any control will be slipped from the State through this measure which, on the other hand, will enable us to extend our efforts by the additional funds we shall receive from the Commonwealth.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban—in reply) [2.48]: I was pleased to hear Dr. Hislop's remarks. He gave us an interesting speech in connection with this matter. I was also glad to hear the comments of other members, which indicated that they appreciated the efforts of this scourge on the people. But I regret that members, generally speaking, have not appreciated what this Bill provides. The second paragraph of the schedule reads—

Whereas at a conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers held at Canberra in August, 1948, it was agreed that the Commonwealth and the several States should participate in a campaign to reduce as soon and as far as possible the incidence of tuberculosis in Australia, and to provide adequate facilities for the diagnosis, treatment and control of that disease:

Then it goes on to say it has been arranged that—

(1) The Commonwealth and the State will forthwith participate in a campaign to reduce as soon and as far as possible the incidence of tuberculosis in Australia and to provide adequate facilities for the diagnosis, treatment and control of tuberculosis.

The conference decided on the agreement, and it is essential that we pass it as it stands. If we do not, we shall not participate in the benefits. Those benefits are nothing like as much as we think we should get or as great as are required. The agreement must be uniform in all the States in order to comply with the constitutional laws of the Commonwealth, and any alterations in the form of the agreement would defeat the whole object.

In the course of his remarks, Dr. Hislop suggested dating the agreement back to the 1st July, 1945. His object was to fix a period at which all the States' expenditures were low and relatively equal. It is true that the adoption by the Commonwealth of the year 1947-48 as a basis for calculation of the Commonwealth contribution is unfair to Western Australia and Tasmania, which are the States that had proceeded furthest in their campaign in those years. The expenditure per head in the different States varied considerably, that in Western Australia and Tasmania being distinctly the highest. It was strongly urged at the conference by the representatives of those States, that a formula should be found which would remedy this inequality. Amongst others, the suggestion was made that a basic rate per head of the population should be fixed, which would be equal throughout the whole of Australia, and that the States should be required to bear this basic rate, and the Commonwealth should contribute the balance.

This and other suggestions were unacceptable to the Prime Minister, who indicated that he would not accept any scheme which had the effect of disturbing the overall budgetary arrangements of the States with the Commonwealth. No doubt because of this view, the Commonwealth finally adopted the year 1947-48 as the base year. So far as this State is required to bear a higher proportion of expenditure upon tuberculosis than some other States, a claim will be made upon the Commonwealth Grants Commission. Dr. Hislop suggests that the Commonwealth will make no contribution to expenditure on the Chest Clinic prior to the 1st July, 1947. This is not correct, because, under the previous Commonwealth Act, expenditure upon the clinic is regarded as the provision of diagnostic facilities, towards which, under the previous Act, the Commonwealth contributes half of the total.

Clause 4 refers entirely to maintenance expenditure, and to donations received towards the ordinary day-to-day expenditure on the campaign against tuberculosis. Members will recall that Dr. Hislop could not understand this clause. It does not refer to gifts or bequests made for capital purposes such as the provision of homes or colonies for research work or other work of a similar character. It is necessary that the Bill be passed in its present form. As I have pointed out, any amendment can only have the unfortunate effect of upsetting the whole arrangement, because of the constitutional position. The measure follows the same principles as apply to the Hospital Benefits Agreement Act and the Mental Institution Benefits (Commonwealth and State Agreement) Bill. There is no reason to assume that the existing administrative arrangements between the Commonwealth and the State will be altered.

I trust, Mr. President, you will permit me to reply to some of the matters raised that are, perhaps, not entirely in accord with the Bill. If you allow me to do so it might clear the air of some misunderstandings. At present the Commonwealth Health Department has a Directorate of Tuberculosis, and it is as a result of the wise counsel of its Director Dr. H. Wunderly, that the present administrative relationship exists. The State Departments of Health are responsible for the initiation and administration of all measures of tuberculosis control within their own States. They receive the fullest advice and cooperation from the Commonwealth Directorate of Tuberculosis, which realises that different States have different problems.

The States preserve their own administrative autonomy. Naturally, however, the Commonwealth expects that any money it supplies will be wisely and economically spent. The arrangement resembles the old one existing between the British Ministry of Health and the English local authorities. The Ministry supplied a block financial grant, but insisted that it be properly spent. A dilatory and inefficient local authority might, and often did, find that half its funds for tuberculosis control would dry up at the source unless it set its house in order. On the other hand, progressive and efficient local authorities were actively encouraged in their programmes.

In the Commonwealth Tuberculosis Act of 1948, there is a provision for the establishment of an advisory council, the chairman of which shall be the Director General of Health, to consist of members not exceeding eleven in number. It is anticipated that the State tuberculosis authorities will each be represented on this council, and also that there will be representation of physicians in private practice. The functions of the council will be to advise the Commonwealth Minister on all measures relating to tuberculosis control. There is no reason to assume that it will wilfully over-ride any State's special needs or conditions, or that the Minister will ignore its advice. It is obvious, for example, that hospital design in Queensland must differ from that in Tasmania, and that anti-tuberculosis measures in the industrialised quarters of Sydney and Melbourne must vary from those to be adopted in our own wheatbelt.

The Public Health Department of this State has established a Tuberculosis Control Branch, the functions of which are to endeavour to eliminate tuberculosis from the community or, at any rate, to reduce its incidence to a minimum. This task is beset with great difficulties and many problems which will utilise to the full all the energies of its medical staff. In pursuing its course, it is essential that its staff preserve the good-will and cooperation of their medical colleagues. It realises that the private practitioner is in the vanguard of any concerted attack on tuberculosis.

In the fourteen months that the Perth Chest Clinic has been in operation, it has been found that the professional relationships of its staff with their colleagues in private practice have been happy and harmonious. As a result of this, between 400 and 500 cases are referred to it every month by private practitioners for an opinion regarding the presence or absence of tuberculosis, and the numbers are progressively increasing. As might well be imagined, many of these persons are found to be suffering from conditions other than tuberculosis. In all cases these patients, along with the others, are referred back to their private doctors with a written report. In some cases it would be inhuman not to allay immediate anxiety on the part of a patient by a few

words which might dispel an overwhelming fear that he might be suffering from tuberculosis.

Another important duty of the clinic is the routine x-ray examination of the chests of members of the public—such as various industrial and age groups. In many of these people, unsuspected abnormalities in the chest are discovered, which are not of a tuberculous nature. The procedure is to interview the person concerned and to explain to him that he has need to consult his private doctor, or to attend one of the metropolitan hospitals if he so wishes. Some people require to be convinced that there is a need to do this and will, not unnaturally, demand to know the reason. Some reason must be given in such cases, and this involves the giving of information which might disclose to the person concerned that he may be suffering from a condition other than tuberculosis.

This is quite unavoidable. Nevertheless, most people have good sense and will accept the advice to see a private doctor with little or no questioning. In all these cases, written reports of the tentative findings of the clinic are sent to the private doctors concerned. Many expressions of appreciation of this service have been received from both patients and doctors. Early this year, a meeting was held and attended by representative physicians and the members of the clinic staff. A mutually satisfactory agreement was reached covering the procedure to be adopted by the clinic concerning the disposal and handling of persons suffering from non-tuberculous complaints.

The clinic staff has loyally observed this agreement and the executive of the British Medical Association states that it has received no complaints, either verbal or written, from any of its members that the medical staff of the clinic has exceeded its legitimate functions in this respect. The members of the clinic's staff have a professional responsibility to discharge when they discover that a person might be suffering from a condition requiring medical treatment or supervision. They have to protect the patient's interests by informing him of the need to seek medical advice.

Large numbers of cases of non-tuberculous diseases of the lungs pass through their hands and they, of necessity, acquire a wide

experience of chest conditions generally, which, indeed, they must have if they are to be proficient in the diagnosis of tuberculosis. Although they realise that the added impetus given in Perth to the diagnosis and treatment of these non-tuberculous chest conditions dates from the establishment last year of the thoracic surgical unit at the Royal Perth Hospital and the Perth Chest Clinic, they know that the essential function of their clinic is to control tuberculosis.

They, therefore, divert these other conditions for investigation and treatment elsewhere, as agreed with their colleagues. But to prescribe that in no circumstances will they discuss in any way the nature of these conditions with the person concerned, in other words submit a muzzling order, when, as has already been shown, such limited discussion may be essential in order to induce the patient to obtain advice elsewhere, is to seek to impose an unacceptable condition, and one contrary to their professional ethics. This matter might well be left to their good sense and their appreciation of their proper role in medical practice. If perhaps it be shown that there might have been one or two minor errors in judgment occurring in the handling of many thousands of cases under pressure of time, the question might pertinently be asked, which of us has never made a mistake?

In other countries it has been found that the discovery of these various non-tuberculous conditions in the chest is a very valuable "by-product" of a tuberculosis case-finding programme. It is inevitable, and it appears unnecessary, to assume that the Commonwealth Health Department is unaware of this, or that it would take any attitude other than that it is a necessary corollary to the clinic's primary function and, moreover, one that is of benefit to the public health generally. Nevertheless, an assurance can be given that the clinic has no desire to be regarded as a diagnostic centre for abnormal heart conditions or other abnormalities which do not come within its proper province, and that its staff realises that tuberculosis will keep them fully occupied for many years to come.

Reference was made by Mr. Bennetts to what Dr. Robson is doing with regard to silicosis. This Bill has nothing to do with

silicosis or with the aluminium therapy treatment that we hope to have in operation at Kalgoorlie and other goldmining centres in the near future. This measure deals solely with tuberculosis and not with silicosis. I trust that members who have had any fear that there might be interference by the Commonwealth with the administration under the State, will now be satisfied that the Commonwealth will not interfere in any way.

As to capital expenditure, if Western Australia desires to put up some elaborate hospital, for instance, and the Commonwealth does not agree, this State may still go ahead with the project although the Commonwealth will not contribute. If the Commonwealth agrees, and no doubt it will agree if the proposition is a reasonable one, there need be no fear at all that the Commonwealth will not contribute. The Commonwealth will pay all the additional expenses in the future. This arrangement is for 10 years only, and, of course, it could be altered from time to time by agreement between the States and the Commonwealth. I trust that members will agree to the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—MARKETING OF POTATOES ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Assembly without amendment.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 3), £4,700,000.

Standing Orders Suspension.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable a Supply Bill to pass through all stages at the one sitting.

I propose to move the first and second readings of the Bill today, but should any member desire an adjournment of the debate until tomorrow, I shall be pleased to accede to the request.

Question put and passed.

First Reading.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban) [3.5] in moving the second reading said: This is the usual Bill by which Supply is sought to carry on the services of the State pending the passing of the Estimates by Parliament. The Estimates are being prepared and the Premier hopes that the Budget will be placed before Parliament this month.

The amount required under the Bill is £4,700,000, which is £900,000 more than that asked for last year. Increasing costs are responsible for the larger amount. The figure of £4,700,000 is made up of—

	£
Consolidated Revenue Fund ..	3,700,000
General Loan Fund	700,000
Treasurer's Advance	300,000
	<hr/>
	£4,700,000

Although it was estimated that the deficit for 1948-1949 would amount to £164,723, the actual sum was £864,813. The usual course of requesting a supplementary grant through the Commonwealth Grants Commission could not be adopted, as the Commission has decided to deal with the deficits of claimant States when the year of deficit becomes the year of review and assessment. Thus, 1948-1949 will become the year of review for the grant to be paid in 1950-51. In conformity with this new scheme of the Commission, it was necessary to regard the 1946-47 deficit of £47,552 as expenditure for last year and to include it in last year's deficit of £864,813.

The revenue for 1948-49 amounted to £20,560,646, an excess of £233,389 over the estimate. This excess was caused principally by revenue from taxation and departmental sources exceeding the estimate by £397,000. Revenue from public utilities, mainly the Railways Department, was £250,000 less than estimated. Expenditure for last year was £21,425,459, exceeding the estimate by £933,479. Public utilities, the Railways Department again being mainly responsible, accounted for £662,000 of this

excess, the balance being, mainly for subsidies for superphosphate road cartage, losses on the State Electricity Commission and the State Shipping Services. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (East)

[3.11]: I do not propose to delay the passing of this measure because this is the first time, during all the years that I have been in Parliament, that the constitutional method of providing finance for the Government has been carried out. Usually, the first payment of the year is made on a warrant of the Governor who accepts responsibility that Parliament will eventually pass a Bill enabling the Government to make the necessary payments. At last we have a Government that is prepared to adopt the constitutional method of coming to Parliament before making payments in the new financial year and asking for Supply pending the passing of its Estimates. Therefore, I congratulate this Government upon being the first one in Western Australia to carry out that procedure.

I was interested to hear the Minister say that the deficit for last year was £864,813 and I was wondering how the Government will provide the money required to make good this amount. It does not necessarily follow that the Grants Commission will provide the money but it can almost be taken for granted. I do not know what the present system is for meeting this expenditure, but in the old days Treasury Bills were issued. When the Minister replies, I would like him to tell us just how that money is found because it is money that has actually been expended. I would like to know whether it is done by an overdraft at the bank; but if that be the case, then money cannot be borrowed without the consent of the Loan Council. The Government may, of course, use trust funds, but that is not a very good procedure. On the other hand, it may have found some other means of financing.

Hon. G. W. Miles: What about the Rural and Industries Bank?

Hon. SIR CHARLES LATHAM: The Government cannot legally borrow from the Rural and Industries Bank any more than it can from any other bank, because of the Financial Agreement entered into in 1928.

Hon. L. Craig: Is not money left to the credit of the General Loan Fund?

Hon. SIR CHARLES LATHAM: The Government may use that, and probably that is one way it has of financing itself, but the Minister will probably tell us all about it when he replies. One point about which I wish to protest—and I have done so on other occasions since I have been in this House—is that of the Government guaranteeing bank accounts for private enterprise. I consider that to be wrong procedure. Some time ago legislation was passed which enabled the Government to do that and I protested strongly when the measure was before the House. I noticed in this morning's newspaper—that is the only source of information that I have, and I do not intend to quote from it for I know you, Mr. President, will not permit me to do so—that a considerable amount of money has been guaranteed to one of the coalmining companies in this State for developmental work. This is the thing that I ask myself, and I ask it as an individual. If I want to get an overdraft, and if the bank will not trust me, why should I ask somebody else to trust me and guarantee my account if I am not good enough security for the bank itself?

Why should the State Government guarantee an account with the bank if the assets of the company are not good enough security without that guarantee? The functions of Government are totally different from that. I may have the wrong impression, and if so I would like to be put right when the Minister replies; but as we are not receiving printed copies of "Hansard," it is difficult to ascertain just what has actually been said in another place. Therefore I have to rely on newspaper reports. Apparently no statement in reply was made by a Minister in another place. I hope the Government will not encourage this sort of thing, because it is using the State's finances to guarantee accounts, and some day the Government will be compelled to meet that guarantee. When I say that I refer to the coalmining company previously mentioned. No doubt Mr. Mann will charge me for daring to mention that this should not be done.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Certainly.

Hon. SIR CHARLES LATHAM: This company should be able, without the aid of the Government, to provide the necessary money for the developmental work that is required. I am not picking the company out, but it is an idea I have had for some

time. When we authorise the Government by legislation to make advances, either direct from the Treasury or through the Rural and Industries Bank, then I will protest against it, because I think the system is wrong. As I stated, I spoke on this when another measure was before the House and the House disagreed with me. By adopting such a procedure, the Government transfers executive power from the Parliament of this country, and for that reason I take strong exception to it. The company should be responsible for its own guarantee for an overdraft for developmental work.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South) [3.18]: The Premier stated that members would have an opportunity of speaking on this Bill because there will be no Address-in-reply debate this year. Therefore I take the opportunity of doing so. I cannot see how legislation will be proceeded with any quicker than when we had an Address-in-reply debate because there has been very little work done in this House to date. Goldfields and country members in the outlying districts have been forced to travel long distances to attend the sittings of this Chamber, which have been of very short duration. In that case it would have been just as well to have opened Parliament in the ordinary way, and at the ordinary time.

I can see by the figures mentioned in the Bill that the Government is slipping back into a most precarious position. I do not know where it is all going to finish. The sooner the Government is supplanted by a Labour Administration, then the sooner shall we be in a better position with regard to housing.

Hon. W. J. Mann: You will slide then; not slip.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: One thing that has assisted the State's financial position to deteriorate is the Government's attitude towards bulk-handling, and the position at Fremantle is probably the worst. Prior to the present Government's assuming office, bulk-handling operations were carried out by the Fremantle Harbour Trust and a certain amount of revenue resulted. Today those operations have been handed over to Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd., and I do not think any agreement has been drawn up or that any money has been received from that company. I do not know

whether I am correct in saying that, but if an agreement has been signed with regard to the Fremantle installations, I do not know that one has not been completed with regard to the Bunbury scheme. However, perhaps the Chief Secretary can put me right on that point.

I am also concerned as to the housing position and the shortage of building materials. Prior to leaving Kalgoorlie a few days ago people who desired some building materials for work around their homes informed me that if I went to a timber yard I would be told that no timber was available. I went to the Adelaide Timber Company in Kalgoorlie on the 4th July and the manager told me that at present he was holding a permit from a person who desired to build a two-roomed house with a verandah, but he was unable to supply any timber whatever to fulfil the requirements of that permit. That position has existed for a considerable time. He also told me the timber position was worse now than ever before and that applied to cement and asbestos also. He took me around his yard and showed me the class of timber—

The Chief Secretary: When was this?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: On the 4th July.

The Chief Secretary: After the strike had commenced or before?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: That position has existed for over 12 months and it is worse now than ever. One of the Goldfields members in the Assembly was also concerned about the timber position and he requested that the Government should do something to alleviate it. As I was saying, the manager took me around his yard and showed me the class of timber he had in stock. He had 8ft. lengths of 6 x 4 and 6 x 6, and a few flooring boards in about 6ft. lengths. This outsized timber has to be cut down and sold to the purchaser at an increased price because of that additional work in cutting the timber to the size required.

From there I went to Bunning Bros. yard and the man in charge told me that supplies of plasterboard sheeting were exceedingly short. He also said that asbestos and cement supplies were scarcer than ever. He further stated that timber was delivered to the yard in wrong sizes and, because it had to be cut down, the increased price had to

be passed on to the consumer. I then went to the yard of Millars' Timber and Trading Company and found the position to be similar. I next visited the yard of the South-West Timber Company in Boulder where the person in charge informed me that there were no supplies of timber, asbestos or cement available and that that position had existed for some time.

Whilst on a recent visit to Merredin to open a kindergarten, I was a member of a deputation, together with a member from another place, which waited on the Honorary Minister for Supply and Shipping, Mrs. Cardell-Oliver. That deputation was told that there was no timber whatever in the State Sawmills yard at that centre and that there had been none for some time. The deputation wanted to know from the Minister what she intended to do regarding the position and they also stated that the Government in power was a "South-West and metropolitan area Government."

In "The West Australian" and the "Daily News," reports of big buildings being erected in the metropolitan area can be seen daily, and these are very perturbing to country people. We desire decentralisation but the present tendency is not correct in that direction. People are being encouraged to come to the city and the outback areas are being starved for population. The city people have all the amenities and everything they can wish for.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Except electric light.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I know that the Minister will tell me that the coal strike is responsible, but I will not believe that because this shortage of materials has existed for the past 12 months, and the Goldfields people have not had a fair deal for some time. The metropolitan area and the South-West get the major portion of building materials and the Goldfields get what is left. Members should visit the Goldfields areas and see the conditions in which the railway men are living and the inconveniences they have to suffer.

I placed a question on the notice paper the other day as to the deplorable housing conditions at Salmon Gums. In that centre and at Norseman there is no timber available. The Railways Department transfers men to those districts and the only persons who will accept such transfers today are

married men with families. If they do accept transfers, they are penalised by the conditions under which they have to live. It is a disgrace to any Government that men should have to live with their families in such small homes. They have to go there because they cannot obtain homes in the metropolitan area, and if the Government is desirous of keeping railway men in those outback places, it will have to build homes for them, even to the extent of depriving people in the metropolitan area of some of their requirements. The Government must grant the Goldfields people decent homes to encourage them to remain there.

One can see many big buildings being erected in the metropolitan area, and that means the consumption of large quantities of cement. I notice that Bairds are going in for reconstruction in a big way, and recently Harris Scarfe & Sandover's carried out a big building scheme, which also involved the use of a tremendous quantity of cement. Then there was another large building erected for Westralian Farmers Ltd. Such big firms are always able to secure supplies, whereas the small man is not in the race for them.

Then there is the question of the construction of schools. During the Premier's tour of the South Province, we inspected the school at Norseman which, like so many others, is much overcrowded. In such outback places the people are not fortunate enough to have lawns, for they cannot use water to the extent possible in the metropolitan area. The people there asked for a close picket fence along the boundary of the school adjacent to the recreation ground, which constitutes a positive nuisance on account of the dust. The position is so bad that when the wind blows under the verandah, it lifts the flooring boards in the school building and the dust is spread over everything.

Hon. L. Craig: Why do they not put a few nails in the boards?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Another parliamentary representative of the South Province was with me, and he can vouch for the accuracy of my statement. The installation of a septic tank system is a positive necessity there. Obviously, the pan system is not hygienic for the purpose of such large schools. However, all the requests that were made at the time were

turned down by the Government. When people from the outback pay a visit to the city, they do not fail to notice the big buildings that are being erected and the modernising of school premises that is going on. I do not know the exact particulars, but I should think that the school which has been provided at Floreat Park must have involved an expenditure of many thousands of pounds.

I also notice that the school at Busselton is being considerably altered and modernised. Obviously, to get what they want presents no trouble at all to the people in the metropolitan area or the South-West. We know why that is so. It is because the big voting power is there. I want to impress upon the Government the necessity of fostering the pyrites industry at Norseman. If that were done, it would induce people to go there. I know the Government has most commendably rendered financial assistance to the company there, but it could go still further.

Hon. L. A. Logan: It would cost more for the farmer.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I have heard that said, but I have also been told that in the long run it would prove cheaper for the farmers.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: How do you know that?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: At any rate, the proposition is worthy of consideration.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: It has been considered.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I understand the Government has agreed to attend to drainage matters and the desilting of dams in the Salmon Gums area. I trust that great consideration will be given to the interests of people living in these outer districts. I am glad to note that the Government is doing something about the Esperance land. Members will realise that Esperance is the natural port for the Eastern Goldfields, and the hinterland includes some wonderful country. The experimental farm that is to be established in the district will prove to the people generally the valuable quality of the soil there.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: Mr. Miles was there many years ago, and knows all about it.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I know about Mr. Miles. When I asked a question in this House about the m.v. "Kybra" being diverted to the Esperance run, the Minister told me that the vessel could not be made available but that consideration would be given to my request should another ship be procured. Personally, I was anxious to see the "Kybra" put on the Esperance run before she got tipped over in a cyclone off the North-West coast! I am concerned about something being done in the interests of prospectors. We have urged the provision of greater amenities for them. We have instanced increased allowances, the erection of a sulphide treatment plant, and the alteration of mills.

The State battery at Kalgoorlie has been there for longer than I can remember, and is very much out-of-date. Notwithstanding that fact, the prospectors have to take their dirt there to be treated. As members will appreciate, if full results are to be obtained from the ore treated, a line is necessary right up to the plant. Every time dirt is handled a certain amount of gold is lost. We have gone so far as to secure iron trucks to avoid the loss of gold because of its sifting through the floorboards during transit. In the course of unloading at the siding, a lot of the dirt drops to the ground during shovelling operations; and again in being shovelled out of the trucks, a certain amount of fine gold is lost. At the State batteries, inadequate storage facilities are provided, and the ore has to be off-loaded on to the ground. It has to be reloaded later, and put into the bins. The elevator that is used at the battery is antiquated. The dirt is lifted some 18 or 20 ft. on the elevator and is dropped into little buckets which are conveyed to the top and fed to the mill. In the course of the dirt being tipped into the bin, a certain proportion drops over the side and falls down the well.

That means the loss of a certain amount of the gold content. That dirt has to be re-shovelled and again put in a bucket to be tipped into the bin. Each time that happens some of the gold is lost. By the time the whole of the dirt goes through the battery, it has been sifted at least half a dozen times, which would decrease the value of the dirt by about 50 per cent. I would not be definite about the 50 per cent. but a certain amount of the value would be lost. All

those mills are out-of-date, and it is time that appliances such as are used on the mines were provided. The mines use conveyor belts, etc., and are thus able to secure the best possible extraction of gold. I hope the Government will do something in that direction.

Recently I heard an announcement over the air that additional appointments had been made to the medical and dental staffs attending school children. On the Goldfields and in the country centres better provision should be made, because an examination of school children for dental or other treatment once a year is not of much use. The visits of the doctors and dentists should be followed up and a better service provided. In the metropolitan area pensioners receive free dental treatment. There is a dental hospital in Perth where any old-age or invalid pensioner may receive treatment free of charge. We on the Goldfields are not so fortunately placed.

Recently I suggested that the Government should make some arrangement with the Goldfields dentists, but they were not agreeable to co-operate. They wanted either the Government or the pensioners to pay the same rates as were charged to ordinary patients. If those people came to Perth, the Government would assist them by granting a rail warrant, but to make the journey would entail difficulties of finding accommodation and clothing, and many of them consequently have to go without the treatment they need. The Government should provide medical and dental attention for Goldfields pensioners and school children similar to that made available in the metropolitan area. I am satisfied that a dentist employed to travel the north country and down to Esperance would have a full-time job.

Owing to the shortage of homes, difficulty is arising from the transfer of railway men from one centre to another. This also applies to members of the Police Force; many men in the two departments have recently been transferred from the Goldfields, where they had their homes and families. One man was transferred to Midland Junction and, being unable to get a home there, had to board at a hotel and leave his wife and family in Kalgoorlie.

The Chief Secretary: Was that a railway man or a policeman?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: A railway man. A deputation on this subject waited upon the Honorary Minister for Supply and Shipping at Merredin. Railway men were being transferred to Merredin, which is a busy shunting yard, and the accommodation provided left much to be desired. In fact, it would not be a disadvantage if a fire broke out amongst those cottages. That is perhaps the only way by which better provision is likely to be made for these employees.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: There might be a new member next year and things might then be improved.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: The fact of some of these transferred employees having to board at hotels when accommodation should be provided for them is causing inconvenience to the public and placing an unfair burden on the men. The cost of boarding at a hotel would absorb most of one's earnings and, in addition, a hotel is not a suitable place for children. Two men who were transferred from Kalgoorlie had their homes there and both had to leave their wives in Kalgoorlie. One of them has been unable to get accommodation and is living at an hotel. I do not know what housing provision is made for policemen when they are transferred, but cottages should be provided for railway employees and, if one is not available, the man concerned should be permitted to remain where he is.

Admittedly some of these transfers represent promotion, but often they do not. Probably it becomes known that a certain man is a reliable chap and, if a reliable man is wanted at Merredin, he is sent there, regardless of the inconvenience he suffers by the transfer. I hope the Government will ask the Commissioner of Railways to give consideration to this matter. As a former railway man, I know that an officer in charge of a district often makes application for a particular man because he knows him to be reliable, but no consideration is given to the inconvenience to which the transferred man is subjected.

I have felt somewhat perturbed about the importation of men to fill high administrative positions in the Railway Department. I think the senior officers in the department should be given every opportunity for promotion to the positions I have mentioned. For many years past, an engi-

neer has occupied the position of Commissioner of Railways; but the fact that a man is an engineer is no evidence that he is possessed of business acumen. Our railways are the biggest business concern in the State and must be managed by a capable man versed in railway practice and able to deal with the travelling public and freights and charges. I concede that our previous railway commissioners were not in a happy position so far as the finance of the railways was concerned.

The railways have an enormous debt and a huge interest bill. In my opinion, the only way we can give the person in charge a chance to prove his ability is to write off the debt and say to him, "We want you to show a profit." If that is not done, no matter who occupies the position, he will be no better off than the other commissioners. I notice that one of the Commissioners has been promoted from a traffic position. The men in the traffic branch of the railways handle 90 per cent. of railway work, while the engineer is only experienced in his own department.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Would you like to see the fares to Kalgoorlie increased?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: No.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: How could he make a profit if he did not do that sort of thing?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Personally, I think there should be a flat rate and that the people in the outback districts should pay the same charges as the people pay within a radius of 50 miles of the metropolitan area. Let the people who do not use the railways foot the bill for the people living in the back country.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: You will have to pay for it.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Of course, the Government at present has an excuse in the coal strike; but when that is over and we return to normal conditions, we ought to be able to look for something better. For instance, every facility is given for a certain train to get on to the Bunbury section. One can go to the station in the morning and see every head on the platform getting that train away on the tick of time.

Hon. L. Craig: Do you not think it ought to go on time?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Every effort is made to get that train away on time. An engine will even be taken from a country train so long as that train gets the best of everything. Why is that? Because we have Ministers living in the district. Now, the Kalgoorlie express is timed to leave Perth at 5 p.m., but it never gets away on time.

Hon. L. Craig: That is because the Kalgoorlie passengers are so slow in arriving!

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I am glad the hon. member said that! No doubt the Chief Secretary, when replying, will blame the coal strike, which is a good let-out for him. The Kalgoorlie express has been leaving three-quarters of an hour late waiting for vans to be attached, and it arrives at Kalgoorlie at 3.30 p.m.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: What Government is responsible for that?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: My desire is to see action taken to get the Kalgoorlie express away on time. It should be afforded the same assistance as is given to the train on the other line I mentioned.

The Chief Secretary: Do you think it is management?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I think there may be some fault in the management. The booking-off of certain of the staff is perhaps the cause of a lot of the trouble. We find on many occasions that the Kalgoorlie express is held up at sections by goods trains ahead of it between Perth and Northam. Surely to goodness, trains travelling such a long distance should be given preference over the other trains. I have not yet met the present Chief Commissioner, but I hope he will do a good job. I also hope that the Government, instead of bringing people from outside the State to fill these high positions, will promote men from the ranks if they are available.

If the men already in the service are denied promotion, we shall find that they will not take any interest in their jobs, and we cannot blame them. I have seen many capable men in the service who have not had a chance to secure better positions. I

have known men who have worked up from the lowest ranks to the position of station master. There are several grades of station masters and some of them are quite capable of filling still higher positions. On the railway of which I am speaking, there were only two posts to which the first-class station men could be appointed, yet when a vacancy occurred an officer from the salaried staff because he was on a higher salary, would be appointed to the position, while the first class station-master would be put back to another station.

The Chief Secretary: Do you agree that there should be a complete reorganisation?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes.

The Chief Secretary: That is what we are doing.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I am not saying that the senior men should always get the jobs.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Be very careful. You are getting away from Labour policy—seniority.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I favour seniority, but one has to give way when a senior officer is not capable of filling the top job. He should not be appointed to it, as he would be unable to perform the duties. I am pleased that I have had the opportunity this afternoon of making my Address-in-reply speech on the debate on this Bill.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: It is the longest speech you have made.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I felt I should not be debarred from advancing some of the requests made by my constituents. I hope the Government will give careful consideration to the railways, home building, and assistance to the goldmining industry and people living in the outback districts, instead of providing amenities only for people resident in the metropolitan area. I support the Bill.

HON. E. M. HEENAN (North-East) [4.20] I want to seize this opportunity to make a few brief remarks, mainly concerning the mining industry, which members do not need me to remind them is in a difficult and even parlous condition. I attribute that largely, but not wholly, to the fact that the

price of gold has not been increased. During recent years costs have been steadily mounting. Most other primary industries have been able to pass on those costs, or a proportion of them; but unfortunately the goldmining industry has not been able to do that, and we are faced with gold at a fixed price and the flood steadily rising against it.

Australia is a party to the Bretton Woods Agreement; and I understand that, as a result, our hands are tied. No-one forced us into the agreement. Our Government signed it willingly and there does not appear to be very much that can be done about it. If one makes an agreement, one is in honour bound to keep it. At the same time, agreements can be varied and modified with the sanction of all parties; and I am hopeful that before very long means will be found whereby the terms of the Bretton Woods Agreement, as they affect the price of gold, can be varied in such a way as will enable at least a couple of pounds to be placed on the existing price. That would be of immense advantage to Australia, and particularly to Western Australia, the State for which mining has done such a vast amount of good during the past 50 years.

So far as the Bretton Woods Agreement and the price of gold are concerned, we in this State are largely powerless to do much. It is essentially a matter for the Commonwealth Government, and that Government has had its full share of opprobrium from the critics who blame it for the stationary price of gold. I believe the solution is not as easy as all that, and that a lot of the criticism levelled against the Commonwealth Government has been biased and the motive behind it largely political.

But now we come to the responsibility of the State Government. That Government has a vast responsibility, because this industry has been directly responsible for the production of immense wealth for Western Australia, and for the employment of many thousands of men and the indirect employment of considerably more. It has also been directly responsible for the formation of townships in parts of the State which otherwise would never have been inhabited. So the responsibility of all concerned, and particularly the Government, is very onerous, and I make the charge that the State Government has not fulfilled its responsibility. Within the sphere in which it can

operate, it could have done a good deal more than it has done; and unless it shows more interest and a better realisation of the parlous condition of the mining towns, it will have a lot to answer for. We know that during the past 12 months, or so the mines at Wiluna, Reedy's and Agnew have closed down. Those facts stand out.

Hon. H. K. Watson: You cannot blame the State Government for that.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: No. I do not know how anyone could connote from my remarks that I am blaming the State Government for it. I have not said that, and I do not think my remarks implied it. Apart from those mines in towns like Menzies, Mt. Monger, Broad Arrow, Laverton, Morgans, Cue and Agnew, there are countless little mines that have closed down that were worked by prospectors; and there is that army of prospectors, who were out exploring and surveying and endeavouring to find new mines, which has almost vanished.

In spite of the advance of science, and the wonderful research that has been made, I am convinced that the prospector is still an integral part of the mining industry. When this State ceases to have an army of good prospectors, well equipped with the knowledge that comes only from long experience, we will not find too many more new mines. It is in that regard that I think the State Government has fallen down. Earlier in the year I asked the Chief Secretary some questions relating to the Government prospecting scheme. His answer was—this was in June; only last month—that there were 23 prospectors on the Government scheme. Under that arrangement they are paid 30s. a week as sustenance.

What sort of scheme is it which attracts only 23 prospectors? I know many of these men. Kalgoorlie is a centre to which they come from various places. We Goldfields members visit towns such as Leonora, Laverton and Menzies. Just recently I was on the Murebison, and I came in contact with the prospectors there. They are all very dissatisfied with the Government prospecting scheme. They say it is no good to them. The 30s. a week does not provide either fish or fowl. Of course, it is obvious that 30s. is not particularly helpful to a man who wants to go out prospecting and be away for months and months and who,

at the end of his endeavours, will probably not have found anything. But one or two of them will find gold which will more than repay the whole of the advances.

I have spoken on this subject before, and I feel that the Government could have made, and could still make, a greater contribution within its own sphere, instead of criticising the Commonwealth Government and tilting at the moon in the form of the Bretton Woods Agreement. Let us do something practical right here. Let us try to do something which will save towns like Menzies and Cue as well as others from going off the map. Let us do something which might result in the finding of other rich mines in these places, which will prevent the people living there from leaving, and which will obviate the necessity of the railways being pulled up, the schools pulled down, and the inevitable exodus to the city.

The prospecting scheme offers great possibilities. I went on to ask the Chief Secretary how much had been spent on it in the last 12 months. The reply was that the Government had spent, from the 1st July, 1948, to the 16th June, 1949, the sum of £2,670 on it. I must tell the whole truth. The Minister explained that in addition, money had been expended on prospecting equipment—a mobile compressor plant and compressors, loans to prospectors, cartage and other subsidies, the total of which would be difficult to calculate. But in a direct way the Government spent £2,670. There are many people in this State who pay that much in taxation, and yet that is the sum total, subject to what I have said, which this Government spent last year on inducing prospectors to go out and find new mines.

Hon. G. W. Miles: It could reduce water rates and freights, too.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: How does that expenditure compare with similar expenditure by the previous Government in its last year of office?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I have had those figures too. I think this is the lowest ebb that has been reached. I am not saying that the last Government did all it could have done, but I do point out that the back country is in very bad shape. It is only a few weeks since I returned from a visit to Mt. Magnet, Cue, Big Bell, Meeka-

tharra and Wiluna. Mt. Magnet is not too bad. The Hill 50 mine is operating there, and I understand it is a pretty good one. Big Bell employs about 350 men. It is just on the balance, I understand. It gets assistance from the Commonwealth, but even so, it is just managing to make ends meet. Meekatharra is in the depths of a depression, and is at a pretty low ebb. Wiluna is a lovely town, just practically given away. At Agnew, Laverton, Morgans, Menzies, Broad Arrow, Mt. Monger, and elsewhere the same story is told. No-one is venturing, and the outlook for the mining industry is very poor indeed. The well equipped mines in Kalgoorlie are keeping going but the grade of their ore has to keep rising in order to cope with increasing costs.

Hon. G. Bennetts: If they were coal-miners they would get more consideration.

The Chief Secretary: They probably would not work at all!

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I realise that the State Government cannot do very much about the price of gold and I know that it has made representations to the Commonwealth Government. The Chamber of Mines and various other interested bodies have also put up propositions, but apparently England, America, Canada and South Africa all have a say as well as Australia. I do not pretend to be able to devise a solution of the problem, although I have a blind hope or feeling that sooner or later a way out will be found.

However, instead of the State Government spending £2,000 odd on prospecting it should spend £25,000 or £50,000, or some such figure, and select good prospectors. There are plenty of them about and they are straightforward honourable old men. They have a lifetime of knowledge and experience, which will die with them. There is a lot to learn about prospecting and many of these men have that knowledge and experience which could be worth a lot of money, and the Government could utilise that knowledge.

Hon. G. Bennetts: If the price of wool and wheat falls, the Government will want these men.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Having made those remarks, I feel that I have fulfilled an obligation which I owe to the Goldfields

and to the prospectors, as well as to the State generally. For goodness sake, let us watch this drift to the city and devise ways and means of keeping in existence the towns in the outback areas of the State. If we cannot do that we should endeavour to locate new mines and if, as I hope, the price of gold rises, we will be able to embark on a new era of prosperity in the goldmining industry.

One matter has been brought before my notice because of the fact that the North-East Province now takes in the eastern part of the Murchison and includes towns from Wiluna down to Yalgoo. You, Mr. President, Mr. Hall and myself represent that province and as you know, Sir, there is no rail transport between Wiluna and Kalgoorlie. In view of the parlous condition of the towns in that area, and the mining industry generally, I feel it is incumbent on us who represent those districts in Parliament to visit the towns in those areas as frequently as possible. I should say that at least a couple of times a year would be a fair thing. Members of Parliament have a lot of other work to do. We have to attend the sittings of Parliament in Perth and even when Parliament is not sitting we have to interview the various Government departments in the city. A hospital ball is being held at Laver-ton shortly, as well as numerous other functions, and the people in those districts like their members to attend. However, we are precluded from doing so, especially at this time of the year, because in most cases there is no rail transport.

The time is long overdue when members representing those far-distant parts of the State should be provided with adequate air transport. I have noticed in the personal columns of "The West Australian" that members of the Commonwealth Parliament fly backwards and forward all the time, and it is only right and proper that they should do so. What is the use of new methods revolutionising transport generally unless they are utilised? Apparently the Government feels that members of Parliament in this State must confine themselves to rail travel.

The Chief Secretary: We do not have a State airways like the Commonwealth Government.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I appreciate that, but if we are to do our job properly some provision should be made for the use of air transport. The Murchison has now been tacked on to the North-East Province and in order to visit the people in those districts it is necessary to travel by air. I do not know what we are going to do if this strike lasts much longer, but there I must give credit where it is due. Goldfields members would have been marooned in Kalgoorlie this week if it had not been for the efforts of the Chief Secretary and the President. Because of their efforts we were provided with transport. I think I can speak on behalf of all Goldfields members and state that we are extremely grateful. Last year we had floods that washed the railways away but during that period aeroplanes were flying and carrying passengers. I do not know what Mr. Hall spends on air travel a year but I am sure that I spend at least £50 to £60 directly in connection with my parliamentary duties, and I know that other members have similar experiences. I trust that should the Minister be consulted about the matter, he will be sympathetic and understanding with respect to our requirements.

On motion by Hon. E. H. Gray, debate adjourned.

BILL—MARKETING OF EGGS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South) [4.51]: I support the second reading of the Bill. During the last few days I have taken some interest in egg matters. I notice that the original Act provides that any person having 100 or more birds is compelled to dispose of his egg production through the Egg Board. I do not know whether the person who has a smaller number of birds is also compelled to adopt the same course, and perhaps the Honorary Minister will explain the position to me. I visited a number of shops recently and I noticed that in most of them the eggs they had for sale to the public were branded as standard. At the same time, I saw some eggs that were not branded at all.

Hon. A. L. Loton: They were newly laid!

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I am just wondering what happens regarding the sale of eggs by the owner of less than 100 birds because many of the eggs I saw were far below the standard size. On many occasions on the Goldfields we have to pay the full price for what are no more than pullets eggs.

Hon. G. Fraser: Were they branded?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: No. Are these smaller poultry-men supplying the shops with eggs that do not have to be disposed of through the board, and are they allowed to charge the full price? On the Goldfields we have to pay from 3s 8d. to 3s. 10d. for standard eggs, whereas in Perth yesterday I saw supplies that were selling at 3s 4d. a dozen. At this period of the year supplies should be plentiful and the board should consider whether or not a reduction in price is warranted. I think the price could be reduced by at least 5d. so that supplies could be available at 2s 11d. per dozen. I know that in May when the birds are moulting eggs are in short supply and naturally the price goes up. On the other hand, when eggs are plentiful, as they are today, the price per dozen should be reduced.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Is it your idea that standard eggs should be sold at a maximum price of 1s. per dozen?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: No. I am pointing out that although eggs are plentiful, they are sold in the shops at a high price. That may be warranted in May when supplies are scarce and the cost of feeding the birds has to be taken into consideration.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: What price do you suggest should be charged?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I think the current price should be reduced by 5d. a dozen. I am not well acquainted with prices, but I think eggs should be available at a cheaper rate and perhaps the price could be reduced by more than 5d. a dozen.

Hon Sir Charles Latham: If the birds did not eat anything it would be possible.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Perhaps the price of wheat should be reduced!

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Between 1945 and 1948, Western Australia produced 33,000,000 dozen eggs and I understand that last year

there was an increase of 13 per cent in egg production. I am led to believe that that is correct.

Hon. H. Hearn: That is with the 40-hour week, too!

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes, they are producing plenty. I do not know whether the State Government was responsible for inviting the Dutch poultry expert, Dr. Haagedoorn, to visit Western Australia. The imparting of his knowledge to our poultry-farmers was of great advantage to our people. I believe he told the poultry-farmers that, with the exercise of care, proper feeding methods and the cultivation of the right strains, they should be able to produce from each bird at least 340 eggs per year.

Hon. H. L. Roche: That would be a terrible strain, all right!

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I do not know whether we have got near to that average yet; if we could do so, it would be a great step forward. I understand that on his poultry run in Canada, Dr. Haagedoorn is running over 20,000 ducks, but I do not know that he goes in for fowls. In Perth we have Albany Bell's hatchery at Mt. Lawley where twice a week 13,000 chicks are produced from the incubators that are capable of taking 2,000 eggs per day. That indicates the large outlay the firm has made in order to provide people with poultry and eggs. An expert is employed who tests the blood and other matters affecting poultry and on the whole a wonderful job is being done there. From the information conveyed to me, I am satisfied that the Government could assist the poultry people by ensuring a more satisfactory supply of meal. Possibly arrangements might be made with the Wyndham Meat Works to furnish augmented supplies.

Hon. L. A. Logan: That is done now.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: But not in large enough quantities. Steps should be taken to meet the current requirements and to help in the expansion of the industry. There is also the bran and pollard position and the Honorary Minister knows quite well that those lines are in short supply. They tell me that if proper control were exercised, the position would be better.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Who are "they"? Did they advocate a decrease in the price of eggs?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I have not suggested that at all. Eggs are not in short supply at present and this is a time when the price to the consumer could be reviewed.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Who told you they were over-supplied now?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I do not know. In the month of May eggs are in short supply; but now that fowls are laying, the price of eggs should be reduced. If my information is correct, this is the month in which large supplies are coming forward. If we take notice of the suppliers, eggs will always be in short supply as their desire is to keep the price up. There is another matter that affects the local consumer. Big ships leaving the State take away hundreds of cases of eggs produced in this State, and this tends to curtail supplies for local consumers. I do not know whether the eggs exported from this State are sold cheaper in the other States than here, but 3s. 10d. per dozen is a high price for eggs; it is almost 4d. per egg. I do not know how people can live on the wages they are receiving today.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Do you mean the poultry farmers or the people who eat the eggs?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: The consumers. We were told that if we voted "No" at the prices referendum, there would be no increase in prices, yet eggs are nearly 4d. each.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Do you know who fixes the price of eggs?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: The board.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Do you know there are three consumer-representatives on the board?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Then you have every chance.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: That is all I have to say on the Bill. I think the proposed amendments are desirable, but I would like

the board to consider the matters I have brought forward this afternoon. If something can be done regarding meatmeal, every effort should be made to do it.

On motion by Hon. C. H. Simpson, debate adjourned.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1. Government Employees (Promotions Appeal Board) Act Amendment.
2. Public Service Appeal Board Act Amendment (No. 2).

Received from the Assembly.

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. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.5 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 13th July, 1949.

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