

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 29th October, 1942.

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

QUESTIONS (6).

RAILWAYS, REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE.

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for Railways: 1, What was the revenue derived during each of the financial years ending, respectively, the 30th June, 1941, and the 30th June, 1942, from—(a) the Katanning-Tambellup-Ongerup line? (b) Katanning-Pingrup line? (c) Wagin-Lake Grace-Newdegate line? 2, What expenses were incurred during the same period in respect of such lines?

The MINISTER replied: 1 and 2, Sectional earnings and working expenses are not recorded and the information is therefore not available.

CIVIL DEFENCE.

(a) Local Authorities and A.R.P. Expenditure.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Mines: In view of the expenditure for A.R.P. purposes met by road boards and municipal councils outside the prescribed areas (within which payment of half expenses incurred has been agreed to by the Civil Defence Council), will he now give consideration to half payments of expenses incurred by authorities outside the area, in connection with which there is conviction

that general safety, including that of school children, is thoroughly justified?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST (for the Minister for Mines) replied: Half payment of certain expenses as referred to above has been made in areas defined by the Military Authorities as vulnerable. In areas not considered by the Army as vulnerable, local authorities have been informed that half payments cannot be made.

(b) Precautions and Equipment at Schools.

Hon. N. KEENAN asked the Minister for Mines: In view of the urgent requests by teachers and others for A.R.P. equipment in the Nedlands and Claremont areas—1, Will he arrange for the issue of tin hats, A.R.P. badges, and arm bands to teachers? 2, Similarly, will he issue tin hats to older boys and girls required for stretcher bearers? 3, Will he issue stretchers, filled haversacks, and first-aid pouches to Nedlands schools? 4, Will he reinforce school trenches and protect same from weather in this area? 5, If not, why not?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST (for the Minister for Mines) replied: 1 and 2, The Commonwealth Government controls the issue of steel helmets, and supplies for Civil Defence purposes are made available after the Fighting Forces' requirements are first fulfilled. The limited supplies received to date have been distributed to the wardens' organisation and other essential services such as Police, Fire Brigades, etc. Recent advices from the Commonwealth, following our urgent requests for larger supplies, have been to the effect that the enlarged Military establishments have delayed civilian supplies but that the position should improve early in the New Year. It is possible for qualified internal sector personnel to obtain badges and armbands if they so desire. 3, Fully equipped first-aid parties from the wardens' organisation in the Nedlands and Claremont districts are available in sufficient numbers to cope with possible casualty treatment in the schools or removal to first-aid posts or hospitals. 4, The Shelters Sub-Committee of the Civil Defence Council has examined this question and has listed schools for attention on a priority based on the grounds of vulnerability and type of ground affected. 5, Answered by 1 to 4 above.

GRASSHOPPER MENACE.

As to Entomologist's Report.

Mr. WARNER asked the Minister for Agriculture: Is it his intention to have laid on the Table of the House the Government Entomologist's report, mentioned by him when dealing with the grasshopper question on the 7th October, 1942?

The MINISTER replied: Yes. I am quite prepared to table this report without the necessity of a formal motion.

GAS-PRODUCERS.

As to Importations.

Mr. CROSS asked the Minister for Industrial Development: 1, Are gas-producers still being imported into Western Australia? 2, If so, to whom were the most recent importations of gas-producers consigned? 3, Are any steps being taken to prevent further importations of gas-producers, with a view to our full requirements being manufactured in Western Australia?

The MINISTER replied: 1, The last consignment arrived on the 25th September, 1942. 2, Jas. A. Dimmitt, Ltd.; Sydney Atkinson, Ltd.; Atkins (W.A.), Ltd.; Attwood Motors (1934), Ltd. 3, Yes. Effective steps have been taken with the full support of the Commonwealth Government.

POTATO CROP.

As to Digging, etc.

Mr. McLARTY (without notice) asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Has the Minister's attention been drawn to a statement in the "Daily News" of the 28th October, that large quantities of potatoes would rot in the ground unless labour was provided to dig them? 2, What action is being taken to prevent this waste? 3, Has any action been taken to prevent the grower from being overcharged for the services of digging potatoes?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (in reply): To reply effectively to the question it is necessary for me to make a statement.

Mr. SPEAKER: Is it in connection with the question?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. May I proceed?

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:

On the last two successive days there have been comments in the "Daily News" which have reference to the likelihood of potato crops rotting unless labour is available to dig them. It seems to me that it is easy for newspaper comment of that nature, both to be encouraged and to be written. It fills up space, but other than that it has very little effect, and certainly no beneficial effect.

Mr. Seward: It may have a very harmful effect!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:

The possibility and prospect are that it can only have a harmful effect. In answer to the first part of the question, the arrangement for labour to dig this highly perishable crop has been a constant source of worry to the Agricultural Department for many months. When the May-June crop had to be dug we had to enlist the services of Chinese, and they dug under difficult conditions. At that time we took every step possible to ensure that the November-December crop would be dug. This particular crop, due to the likelihood of infestation of moth, has, of necessity, to be dug quickly. Although it can be said, too, that the growers did not in all cases do their utmost to assist us in May, it is not true for the newspaper to suggest that the farmers themselves are leaving the job this time to someone else, and that that someone has fallen down on it. Every endeavour to comb the land for labour is being made. It has been exhaustively combed to meet this situation, and every perishable crop is vying, one with the other, for the available labour, which is very short. I am able to inform the House that, in spite of the alarmist Press paragraphs, we think that the 8,000 tons of potatoes about to be dug in the next four or five weeks, will be dug.

Hon. N. Keenan: What are you charging the grower?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is a pertinent remark and is part of the question asked by the member for Murray-Wellington. It is very difficult when we have scratch and inexperienced labour to say that the costs will not rise.

Mr. Hill: They are up 5s. a bag.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Probably about 30 per cent. of the labour that we will have to use will be totally inexperienced.

Mr. Fox: They are paying 3s. a bag in Victoria.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It is 4s. in Victoria. Mainly due to the recent activities of the Under-Secretary for Agriculture—I might say almost solely—the growers have had an increase in price of £2 a ton. Yet the Press—but I have no substantiation directly from farmers—suggests that the farmers will not pay the increased prices which are unavoidable in these circumstances. But I assure the member for Murray-Wellington that we expect to get the 2,000 acres of crop dug and lift 8,000 tons of potatoes, and be able to hold the 4,000 tons necessary for this State. We also expect to get an adequate price for the farmer, and see that he is not exploited in regard to labour costs.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Mr. North and A.R.P. Equipment at Schools.

Mr. NORTH: I desire to make a personal explanation in regard to Question No. 3—A.R.P. equipment at schools. This really comprises two questions, one in connection with Claremont and one as to Nedlands. In order to save space it was drafted as one question. As it appears on the notice paper it is asking that the Nedlands schools be supplied with certain equipment, and is ignoring the Claremont schools. We are asking for that equipment to be supplied to schools in both areas.

BILL—LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY DURATION AND GENERAL ELECTION POSTPONEMENT.

Introduced by the Premier and read a first time.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

- 1, Mining Tenements (War Time Exemptions).
- 2, Road Districts Act Amendment.

FILL—MOTOR SPIRIT AND SUB- STITUTE LIQUID FUELS.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—PUBLIC AUTHORITIES (POST- PONEMENT OF ELECTIONS).

Council's Amendments.

Schedule of three amendments made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 3: In paragraph (a) of Sub-clause (1) delete the words "either for the whole or any part of the period of such time of war" in lines 34, 35 and 36, and substitute the words "for such period, not exceeding twelve calendar months."

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This amendment is the one I promised members would be inserted when the Bill was dealt with in another place with a view to limiting the period for which any election could be postponed to 12 months at any one time. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 2. Clause 3: In paragraph (c) of Sub-clause (1) insert after the word "Minister" in line 11 the words "from a public authority representing the opinion of a majority of the members of such public authority, or a petition."

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I remember assuring the Committee, when the Bill was dealt with in this Chamber, that if a local government body desired an election to be held it would not be postponed. The effect of the Council's amendment is to place in the Bill words that will have the effect of applying what I indicated would be the policy. At the same time the provision for a petition from the ratepayers, as set out in the Bill, will also apply. If a petition signed by 10 per cent. of the ratepayers is received requesting an election to be held, it will not be postponed. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 3. Clause 3: In paragraph (c) of Sub-clause (1) delete the word "local" in line 15 and substitute the word "public."

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This amendment is consequential. The effect will be to refer to "public authorities" instead of "local authorities." The former is the correct designation. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

Resolutions reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

BILL—LOCAL AUTHORITIES (RESERVE FUNDS).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 22nd October.

MR. HILL (Albany) [2.35]: I support the second reading of the measure, which is necessary owing to existing abnormal conditions due to the war. As the principal Act stands at present, a local government body when striking its rates takes into consideration any funds accumulated during previous years. Local authorities in common with private institutions are now experiencing great difficulties owing to the shortage of labour and materials. Consequently many of them have accumulated funds because they cannot carry out necessary maintenance and other works. A suggestion has been made that the rates should be reduced, but I regard that as most undesirable because the funds have been accumulated at the expense of maintenance work not undertaken. It is obviously desirable to keep those funds in reserve so that when labour and material are available, the arrears of maintenance work can be carried out.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan): The Bill will, I feel sure, receive general support but there is one particular phase of it which persists throughout that I regard as undesirable. I refer to the Ministerial control that is indicated. Not once or twice but at least a dozen times through this small Bill of 13 clauses it is set out that the Minister or Governor, which means, I understand, the Cabinet—

Mr. Stubbs: The Executive Council!

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes. It probably also means the Minister, who may recommend a certain course that has to be approved by the Executive Council. Throughout the Bill this indicates an endeavour to bring about a method of control which, in my opinion, is unjustifiable. I am inclined to the opinion that the draftsman who prepared the Bill did some of his work without having received full instructions, because it appears to me that the Minister has not so far shown himself to be possessed of a desire to be

dictatorial in his relations with local government authorities, and so it would seem that another influence has intervened. As a result we read in the Bill over and over again such phrases as "the Minister shall direct," "the Minister may direct," "if approved by the Minister," "unless the Governor is satisfied," "on the recommendation of the Minister" and so on.

From that standpoint, the Bill strikes a new note in the desire to supplant the local government authorities by withdrawing from them powers which, in my opinion, they should possess. Throughout the Bill the authority of the Minister is stressed so frequently that one wonders whether there has been a misunderstanding regarding the funds concerned, and possibly a misapprehension has arisen that instead of alluding to revenue some special grant is being referred to. That, of course, is not so. The whole of this money is revenue secured by rates from those who have been assessed, and on whose part I should say there would be agreement so far as the assessments were concerned. But to give to the Minister the power now sought is not calculated to encourage the members of local authorities to carry out their work. I realise that in Committee it might be possible to make certain amendments. I take it that the Minister is not anxious to adhere to the foreword and imprint of the whole Bill, and that those concerned with local government, municipal or road board, should become mere ciphers and have no control.

A point that strikes me forcibly is that since rates are struck at a certain period of the year and duly collected, the ratepayers should, and do in the ordinary course of events, have full control. The council or board receives the benefit of the excess rates but, when an excess is paid into a reserve fund, a rate equivalent to that of the previous year could not be struck in the following year. On account of the implications that exist, it is essential that the law be amended. Many of our roads are already breaking up because of a shortage of manpower and a dearth of bitumen and other material, and it is only right that a local government body should be able to hold in reserve such money as is possible in readiness for the time, not far distant I hope, when this work may be undertaken. If, however, this power is given and is restricted to the extent that whatever is done must

receive the approval of the Minister, we shall, in my opinion, be acting wrongly. I hope the Minister will not insist upon what I have suggested might have been an un-instructed act on the part of the draftsman.

Some objection might be taken to the position regarding rates collected and not really required in order to carry out essential services. The spirit and effect of the Road Districts Act make it clear that no local authority has power to impose a rate beyond what is required to carry out certain anticipated works. From this standpoint we must not overlook the fact that in many country and goldfields districts there are numerous empty buildings, residential and business premises, and in some instances it is a matter for consideration whether it would be justifiable to impose rates to carry out works which cannot be done at present, which may not be done next year and, in fact, the time for the carrying out of which is a matter of uncertainty. That, however, is a detail. I propose to support the broad principles of the Bill, but I cannot agree to the proposal to withdraw from local authorities the power vested in them of expending their money and doing within carefully-considered limitations whatever is justified and necessary. I earnestly hope the Minister will assure the House that he does not intend to do something, the effect of which, in my opinion, would be to destroy some of the confidence felt in his Ministerial control.

MR. DONEY (Williams-Narrogin): I, too, think that the Bill is a timely one and generally speaking has been wisely drawn, but with the member for Swan I believe it unduly restricts the discretion of local authorities in the disposal of moneys in the fund. During last week-end I referred the Bill to local government authorities in my district and, except in two instances, have not yet received replies. I am anxious to have a more general idea of the attitude of those bodies to the Bill, and I trust the Minister will not object to postponing the Committee stage until a later sitting. The Bill has been properly termed by the Minister a war measure, not that it is concerned with the emergencies of war, but because it seeks to solve what has become a problem solely on account of the war. The position of many municipalities and road districts is that today, with a pronounced shortage of manpower and an equally pronounced shortage of road-making and other

material, those authorities cannot use all the money accruing from collected rates, although naturally this would not apply to bodies which happen to be working on an overdraft.

Where the income has been substantially in excess of the expenditure, the relevant sections of the Road Districts Act and the Municipal Corporations Act require those bodies to strike a rate calculated to do no more than just meet the discrepancy between the money in hand and the prospective expenditure for the next financial year. If the money in hand equalled the prospective expenditure, no rate could be struck. I think—and I believe the Minister expressed this view—that to impose lower rating over a period would be most unwise. And so it would be desirable to let those surpluses accumulate until they become the reserve fund that the Minister has so copiously mentioned. What the Minister suggests seems to me excellent, the idea being to have on hand a large fund to finance the huge amount of constructional and repair work left undone during the war, but requiring attention immediately the war is over. Such work is, of course, in ordinary circumstances beyond the power of ordinary revenue to finance, and thus the reserve fund becomes necessary.

Far too much discretion is, in my opinion, allowed to the Minister, although I quite realise that someone has to police the provisions of the Bill. Even so there are three provisions dealing with the Minister's discretionary powers that can, I think, with advantage be slightly amended. There is one difficulty which may arise, that when the war ceases, or when the Commonwealth shall regard the war as having finished—which may be a different thing—quite possibly there may then be a shortage of men and material, especially the latter. I ask the Minister, when replying to the debate, to explain to members whether the provisions of the Bill cover that. Other than the few amendments which I consider necessary to the Bill, I certainly support the second reading; but I may again remind the Minister of the need for postponing the Committee stage in order that more views from country bodies vitally interested may be forthcoming.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth): The reasons given, in my opinion, justify sup-

port of the Bill. Through the passage of the measure it does not follow that there will be a departure from the long-established principle that rates struck shall be sufficient, and no more than required, to meet the expenditure of a financial year. The Bill is limited to the duration of the war. The measure does not unduly interfere with the discretion and powers of local authorities.

Mr. Sampson: That is the very point.

Mr. McDONALD: It is an enabling Bill. It does not compel any local authority to set up a reserve fund, but only says that it may do so. It does not compel any local authority to maintain an existing rate, but under the measure it may do so. However, any local authority which desires to reduce its rate is quite at liberty to do so. If any local authority has the idea that because its expenditure is lower the rate may be lowered, and then such local authority has the same power, under the Bill, to do so as it previously had to reduce the rate. But the Bill does meet the objective mentioned by the Minister, to safeguard local authorities from creating for themselves, in the absence of this measure, a number of quite serious difficulties at the period when the war ends. I therefore support the Bill.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (in reply): I hasten to assure members that the Bill is not the result of the uninstructed drawing of the draftsman.

Mr. Doney: I did not suggest that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No! That was the tenor of the speech of the member for Swan.

Mr. Sampson: The Bill seems an innovation.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Bill does not go as far as the local authorities desire, because we make this a war-time measure, limited to time of war. As the question has been raised whether the Government takes too much authority under the Bill, let me point out that local authorities work under the powers delegated to them by Parliament. In this case there is a notable departure both in respect of municipal councils' authority with regard to rating and also in respect of road boards. The Local Government Department exercises almost complete supervision over the funds of those bodies. The officers of the department are the auditors; and apart from audit of road

board accounts we have first-class officers who go round the State and gather the circumstances of the various boards, and advise the secretaries of these boards and the boards themselves in respect of their finances, as well as in respect of their legal obligations.

In many instances road boards perhaps have not as competent officers as one would like owing to enlistments—that feature is being improved very considerably but numbers of competent secretaries have enlisted and the boards affected are obliged to carry on with temporary staffs—but the fact is that the local authorities undoubtedly remain the controllers in regard to rates. Here is a case where we depart from the existing practice, at the request of the local authorities; and this provision I regard as very wise indeed. Reserve funds should be built up, but there should be some discipline exercised with regard to authorities desiring to establish reserve funds. The member for West Perth knows that no interference whatever is proposed with those bodies that do not desire to take advantage of the Bill. They can please themselves whether they reduce rates and whether they establish reserve funds.

Mr. Doney: Under this Bill, could local authorities establish reserve funds without coming within the scope of the measure?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No. They can reduce their rates if they so desire, and they can use up surpluses already established in their accounts; but where a local authority does desire to establish a reserve fund, there should be proper control by the Local Government Department. And similarly with municipalities! It must be borne in mind that this is a temporary power only, and not one which we propose to make permanent. There is provision for the winding-up of such reserve funds, and the Local Government Department is to exercise control and police the carrying out of the measure. Although the Minister has control of the Local Government Department, needless to say he has his officers. There is an officer in control, the secretary of the department, and there are auditors; but the Minister has to approve; in connection with road boards everything of an exceptional character still has to be approved by the Minister. Requests from boards to refrain from striking loan rates have to come before the Minister for his

approval. All through, therefore, local government finance is supervised by the department which provides the auditors.

Mr. Sampson: The officers of the department are highly efficient.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. In connection with the establishment of reserve funds, those officers will just in the same way advise all local authorities how this should be done and how the funds may be invested. They would have to keep within the law in respect to investments, as provided for in the Bill. When all these provisions are insisted upon, and the Government becomes responsible for this temporary departure from the existing law—municipal and road board—we must have a supervising authority, and so that too is provided for. I have no objection to the postponement of the Committee stage. We do not rush these things. They are entirely non-party. Whereas we desire to give boards and municipalities these additional powers, I think they should be given under proper supervision so that, from the fact that they have to justify to the department anything that is done, that in itself will constitute a very salutary influence upon them.

Mr. Doney: The powers given are not necessarily harsh.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No. When members read the word "Minister" they will understand it means that the department will act as friendly and useful advisers, not only to road boards but to municipalities.

Mr. Sampson: And to the Government.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: They will be anxious to keep within the law. These reserves have been built up illegally, but we are not saying much about that. Now that we seek to make that act legal, and to give the local authorities the necessary power to deal with the money, and since the Parliament directs that this power shall be given, I think it is justly right and fair that there should be some supervisory authority to see that this is done in accordance with the temporary power that is given. I offer no excuse for the fact that this has to be approved by the Governor-in-Council. The other matter mentioned by the member for Williams-Narrogin is worthy of comment. It is true that after the cessation of hostilities there will be a great demand by all local

authorities for material, particularly bitumen. We propose to establish some order in that regard.

At present the Commissioner for Main Roads is the authority—bitumen being frozen—as to whether bitumen shall be released. He is, in fact, the chairman of the committee which deals with that matter. I should say, therefore, that all requests will be made to him, and that all material available will be fairly rationed in accordance with the demand and the priority after the case has been put up. There will be no rush from those who may have money, some of the big municipalities, resulting in their getting the whole of the material available, for it will be rationed in a fair manner. The question put by the hon. member was a very pertinent one, but the matter will be attended to. That is one of the reasons why these reserve funds will be needed. We hope that they will be available for the purchase of such material as is on hand. The policy will be fairly to ration all that which is available. The hon. member need have no fear that local authorities will be unduly interfered with. I am sure he has never heard a road board complain that the department has unduly interfered with it.

Mr. Sampson: Under this Bill road boards will complain.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I know of many instances in which road boards have received very good and very friendly advice from the department, but very little has been said about it. They are not worrying. By another measure that is before the House it is proposed to take a little more power than we now have in respect to the dismissal of municipal officers. I am not sure that the auditing system we have so far as road boards are concerned should not be extended to municipalities. That, however, has not been done, and I am not raising the question now.

Mr. Doney: That point is arguable.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am not raising it now. I do know of instances where much advantage has been derived by municipalities when they have had a central government audit.

Mr. Doney: I know of plenty of instances to the contrary.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I know of cases where such a system would have been of great advantage. These are the

main questions that have been raised, and I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1942-43.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 27th October; Mr. Marshall in the Chair.

Vote—Public Works and Buildings, £122,720 (partly considered):

MR. J. HEGNEY (Middle Swan) [3.7]: I desire to submit one or two matters for the consideration of the Minister. On several occasions I have protested that some of the schools in my electorate have not been properly maintained and looked after. On the last occasion when the Estimates were being discussed, in 1941, I went to considerable length to point out the difficulties under which some of these schools were labouring. I mentioned particularly the Redcliffe school. For several years during the winter there is a huge pool of water practically surrounding the building. The rainwater comes off the roof, passes into the downpipes, and lodges around the school. An excellent building is thus rapidly falling into a state of disrepair. The damp has risen halfway up the walls, and the position is wholly unsatisfactory from the point of view of the children as well as of the parents. Last year I pointed out that a ladder belonging to the Public Works Department had been standing against the wall for nine months without any steps being taken to use it for the purpose for which it was put there.

Although we may be short of manpower for work of this description, it is time men were placed at the disposal of the Education Department so that they might be sent to the different schools and might keep the buildings in a proper state of repair. At the Redcliffe school the walls will eventually crumble if they are not attended to. From the point of view of economy, attention should be given to these buildings in the interests of the department itself. The schoolmaster and the people whose children attend the school have repeatedly brought the matter to my notice. I have also drawn the attention of the authorities to the position and have ventilated the grievance on a number of occasions in the hope that something would be done. I have come to the

conclusion, however, that to talk in this Committee on matters connected with the Estimates is to speak to no purpose, because no notice is taken of what is said. Nevertheless I am going to observe my rights as the representative of that district. The people have just cause for complaint. The school is a good brick building but it is half surrounded by water. To drain the ground properly would not cost very much. The water is not stagnant but comes off the roof. A dry-well could be constructed to drain off the water but nothing has been done. I notice that the Estimates show a saving in the amount spent on repairs and maintenance. A couple of men could have been sent out to give attention to this matter. It would cost about £20 at the outside. In fact, I doubt if it would cost as much as that effectively to drain the ground and put it in proper order.

Other grounds also require attention. There is the Rivervale school ground and that of the Bayswater school. Ever since I entered Parliament I have advocated that proper attention should be given to the school grounds I have mentioned. We hear a good deal about the new order that is to be ushered in, and we are looking forward to its inauguration when the war concludes. The children of today will be the men and women living under the new order. But at present they have to attend schools that are exceedingly badly cared for. The playing area of the Redcliffe school is particularly bad because of the water trouble. It is about time the Public Works Department improved the position. I hope I shall not have to raise the matter again. I am reluctant to discuss such questions at this time. The manpower position is certainly serious but we have a duty to keep certain buildings in reasonable repair. The conditions to which I have referred are not peculiar to the acute war period but have prevailed for years, and it is about time they were remedied. I hope the department will give some attention to the matter at the earliest opportunity.

Complaints have been made about the bus transport through the Belmont district to Redcliffe and Guildford. The service given to the north-eastern portion of the metropolitan area is hopelessly inadequate in many directions.

Mr. Cross: That is private enterprise.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: First of all many buses have been commissioned for the purpose of

taking men to the Pearce flying ground. Buses have been taken off the run that ordinarily serve those districts.

Mr. Cross: Why do you not complain to the bus company?

Mr. J. HEGNEY: I am quite capable of making this speech without the assistance of the member for Canning. The people have bitterly complained about the overcrowding on the buses on this route, particularly at night. It is a scandal. The position is particularly bad as regards those buses leaving the city late at night. In many instances 10 to 15 soldiers can be seen riding on top of a bus. The trouble was intensified by the fact that there was a camp at Belmont and there are still camps located at Redcliffe, South Guildford and Midland Junction. The soldiers come to the city and have to return before midnight. Consequently serious overcrowding takes place, and many of the citizens living in the suburbs I have mentioned have great difficulty in securing transport facilities. To a large extent that could be remedied. Again, womenfolk have complained of the attitude of drivers of these buses, who frequently show no courtesy at all. Women press the button for a bus to stop at a certain place, but the driver ignores the warning and carries them on beyond the stop.

Hon. N. Keenan: Perhaps the communication system is not good.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: The hon. member doubtless has a more up-to-date service in his electorate, but I point out that the bells on these buses are efficient. These are not isolated instances. The Belmont Park Road Board recently waited on Mr. Nankivell, the manager of the Beam Bus Company, and protested.

Many complaints have been made to me by people from Belmont about the insolence of these bus drivers. The buses are inadequately staffed inasmuch as there are no employees to collect the fares. Buses travelling from Redcliffe and Belmont to Perth are held up near Victoria Park, and it takes about a quarter of an hour for the fares to be collected. A good deal of time is lost in transit and more employees should be engaged. It might be said that no employees are available but recently the Tramway Department called for applications from women wishing to serve as conductors, and received numerous applications. The supply was greater than the demand. More employees

should be engaged to collect fares on these buses, and the service should be made adequate for the travelling public who have to go to Rivervale, Belmont, Midland Junction and beyond. I suggest to the Minister that some of the South Perth buses should be deflected so that soldiers, who have to get to their camps at stated times, might be catered for and a more adequate service provided for the ordinary travelling public.

Mr. Berry: Where are you going to get the buses?

Mr. J. HEGNEY: Some were secured recently and I am asking for a share of them. I have seen these buses myself and therefore I know that the instances of overcrowding are not isolated. The military camp that existed at Belmont has been closed for a couple of months because the area was declared to be unsuitable for the training of troops, but the position I have mentioned has persisted and no remedy has been effected although the matter has been brought to the notice of the company. I understand that one or two drivers who were not courteous to passengers and disregarded the signal to stop have been dismissed. The complaint is that many of the drivers are not courteous to the travelling public. The buses are overcrowded and something should be done to relieve the position. Many of the buses travel to Pearce. It has been suggested that the railway could be used instead if a spur line were built to the aerodrome. I understand that at one time many of the men returning to the Pearce aerodrome had to be in by 8 o'clock in the morning. The position is now altered and they have to be back by mid-day, and the bus returns to the city with the men who come off at that time. The people in Guildford, South Guildford, Redcliffe and Belmont who seek to get on that bus have no hope at all. I have myself stood outside the Belmont Park Road Board Hall and seen buses pass people who were hailing them to stop. The Minister and the Transport Board could give special consideration to this matter.

Another thing is the question of balance sheets which show the earnings of this company. Those figures are not known to the public or to the private members.

[Mr. Seward took the Chair.]

Mr. Sampson: It is a limited liability company.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: That information is in possession of the Transport Board, and it is time that an examination of the fares in that district was made. If a person travels to Redcliffe it costs him 1s. 2d. return, but if he travels to Guildford the fare is only 1s. 3d., or an extra 1d. for a distance of something like six miles return. The fares are reasonable where the service is contiguous to the railway, but immediately it gets beyond railway competition they are much higher. I have received complaints along those lines over a considerable period.

The time has come when the transport service of the metropolitan area should be under one authority, and the profits derived from it should go back into the development of the system. Today the owners of private buses retain to themselves the profits after putting something by for repairs and so on, but they do not put back into the running of the buses sufficient to provide new vehicles and adequate transport for the people who are paying for the service. The same thing applies today in connection with the Government-owned services. The revenue derived therefrom goes back to Revenue instead of being available for the purchase of new vehicles. Western Australia is the only State in the Commonwealth where privately-owned buses are operating in the metropolitan area. In Queensland they are municipally owned, and in New South Wales both the buses and the tramways come under the control of the State Government. If all transport came under the one control the competition existing between the privately-owned bus and the Government-owned bus would be eliminated and the revenue derived from the operation of the buses would go to the one authority, whereas today there is competition between the companies as to which one shall have this route or some other route.

If we had one transport authority, as is the case in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, it would be better for the development of the metropolitan area. The Labour Government in this State some years ago when development was taking place slipped in this direction, in not taking control. Mr. Lang was then the Premier of New South Wales and he did one good job for that State—overnight he bought up the buses and put them under one authority so that today there is an efficient transport system in that State! We could have a more efficient one

here. Some of the men who have been directors of the Beam Bus Company were very hard. They tried to draw as much revenue from the service as they could for the shareholders. That might be all right from the point of view of a few shareholders, but it is no good from that of the travelling public.

The fares both to Rivervale and Redcliffe should be reviewed by the Transport Board. The question of improving the service should be gone into thoroughly and this company should not be allowed to get away with things as it has in the past. The public provides the revenue and is entitled to better treatment. I will admit that the manager cannot be responsible for employees who are insolent or discourteous to the travelling public. The only thing he can do is to get rid of them and replace them with better workmen. I have received many complaints and bitter ones, from the womenfolk of the Belmont and Rivervale districts in particular, and I bring them now to the Minister's notice in the hope that he will take up the question with the Transport Board to see if the position cannot be improved.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison): I endorse the remarks of the member for Middle Swan. I suffer because of compulsion, inasmuch as I cannot walk seven miles and have to use this service. I know probably more about the service of the Beam Transport Company than do most of those who use it, because they do not avail themselves of it as frequently as I do. I tell the Minister for Works, who is in charge of transport matters, that this is one of the most disgracefully-conducted services to be found in this or any other State. I refer to the Beam Transport services between Perth and any of the terminals to which they run going East. It can, of course, be argued that due to the war that company cannot replace buses with the same speed as during normal times; and that due to the shortage of labour it cannot man its service efficiently. That argument could be advanced and many might believe that that is so. To a degree it is correct, but I want this Committee, and more particularly the Minister, to know that I reported this service on more than one occasion to the Transport Board. I understand from the correspondence and negotiations which took place that the board called in the traffic manager, and put before him the facts as I

gave them. He admitted them, but put up the plea that he could not do any better because he could not get buses to replace the old ones, or get labour.

The Minister for Works: Are they overcrowded?

Mr. MARSHALL: They are never anything else, morning, noon or night.

Mr. Patrick: That obtains on practically every other route.

Mr. MARSHALL: The member for Middle Swan did not exaggerate the position. Frequently soldiers stand on the back bumper and hang on to the hooks, but they are still obliged to pay their fares. That is absolutely true. As for the manager's statement that he could not improve the service, when his assertion was first brought to my notice I reminded the chairman of the Transport Board that only four girls were employed to collect fares on the buses. The system adopted by the company is a sort of Chinese puzzle. When a bus leaves the city, the girl who collects the fares drops off after going a few miles, and gets on another bus travelling towards the city.

When a passenger boards a bus at, say, Redcliffe, and there is no girl on it to collect the fares, he goes to the driver, who usually gives him a look of scorn and proceeds along the route. The passenger may stand a little while expecting the driver to collect his fare, and then he may be told that a girl will board the bus later on, and that he should pay his fare to her. I believe it is a breach of the traffic regulations to travel without a ticket. The following day there is no girl on the bus, and the passenger, profiting by his previous experience, does not worry about paying the driver. In due course, the bus is stopped and the individual is called upon to pay his fare to the driver. That is how this Beam service is managed! I believe the manager is a man named Nankivell, and he says he cannot improve the service. I suggested to the chairman of the Transport Board that he should tell the manager to employ some more girls on the buses and see how many extra trips he could make. I am confident that he could make five or six extra trips daily.

Mr. Thorn: Who are the shareholders?

Mr. MARSHALL: I shall have something to say about the tactics of some of the shareholders. I endorse what the member for Middle Swan said regarding insol-

ence and the treatment experienced by the womenfolk. There is some justification for the insolence. Imagine the position of a driver who has to collect the fares from a large number of passengers, some of whom have the necessary change, while others are without any change at all! The buses are usually full to capacity. The driver may expect a girl to board the bus to collect the fares, but she does not arrive, and so the bus has to stop near the Causeway while the driver carries out that work. How can men be expected always to be courteous in such circumstances? It is too much to expect the driver to do that work. If the employees of the company received decent treatment from their employers and extra labour were employed, the insolence that is apparent from time to time would not obtrude itself so frequently. I understand the big shareholders in this concern are also shareholders in the Midland Railway Co. A spur line from the Midland railway at Bullsbrook to the Pearce Aerodrome would not be as profitable as the bus service for the "blue birds" who travel between the city and the aerodrome.

Mr. Thorn: I think you mean that those associated with the Midland Railway Co. are also shareholders in the Beam bus service.

Mr. MARSHALL: The whole of the parties are interested. The man who operates the Beam transport system is also a shareholder and general manager of the Midland Railway Co. That applies today as it did formerly.

The Minister for Works: I do not think that applies today.

Mr. MARSHALL: The general manager of Beam Transport Ltd. is also general manager of the Midland Railway Co.

Mr. Thorn: You are referring to the attorney?

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes.

The Minister for Works: The man who was general manager of the Midland Railway Co. is now deceased.

Mr. MARSHALL: I understand that the present occupant of the position succeeded the other in the two positions. Mr. Poynton died, and the present occupant of the position took his place. At any rate, he has big interests in both the Midland Railway Company and the Beam service. If a spur line were put in from Bullsbrook to the aerodrome, I understand 16 buses would

be released for general operations but that proposition would not be so lucrative as the present bus service. Those vehicles are packed with young men and women travelling to and from the aerodrome, and the same applies respecting the shorter runs in the suburbs when the vehicles are fully loaded with civilians. The position is so deplorable, simply because those interested require profits. They will not employ a girl for each bus although full loads are carried morning, noon and night, including Sundays.

I live 6½ miles out of the city, and on three occasions in one week I boarded the bus at Redcliffe and travelled to Perth or vice versa, and not once did I have a seat. I do not choose the times that I travel. That gives members some idea of the conditions obtaining on that route. It serves as a good illustration of what private ownership really means when it enjoys a monopoly. That was also illustrated by the point raised by the member for Middle Swan regarding fares. I travel 6½ miles, the fare being 1s. 2d. return. By the payment of another 1d. I could travel on to Guildford, simply because over that part of the route the bus runs in competition with the railways. The bus proprietors put up the fares when they run without competition and reduce them the moment there is competition. That indicates what such people will do. The buses are in a damnable state. Frequently it happens—there was such an experience this week—that the passengers have to get out of the bus at the terminus in St. George's-terrace in response to a call for help. They have to push the bus along the road and head it for the river so that it can get a run downhill.

Mr. Thorn: Some of the buses look as if they had just returned from Libya.

Mr. MARSHALL: That is so. They are in a deplorable condition. If not sufficient manpower is available, one of the other buses has to push the vehicle along until it can be started. The driver's principal job is never to let the engine stop. He has to keep the engine running at a high speed while he collects fares because, if he does not, he will not get it going again. The vehicles are damnable filthy. They are never brushed or hosed down—unless some individual has suffered from over-indulgence.

Mr. Thorn: Or sea-sickness.

Mr. MARSHALL: Week-in, week-out, they are never dusted or swept. They are in a damnable state of disrepair. Some of the windows are up and cannot be lowered; some are down and cannot be raised; some are stuck half way. As for emergency doors, God help the women and children if a fire should occur! Incidentally, fires are likely to occur on these buses because the engines are in a bad state of repair, and with an internal combustion engine, back-firing is likely and that could set fire to the vehicle. The emergency doors are frequently tied up with wire so that it would be impossible to open them in the event of a fire. If one did occur, there would be a stampede, and I am sure some passengers would be fatally injured.

Mr. Thorn: In that event what would happen to the school children carried by the buses?

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes, the buses running up that way carry a lot of children. I have spoken to the Transport Board and I think it has done all that it can. The case was misrepresented to the board. The company is reaping huge profits—it must be getting terrific profits—because the buses are always full and more often than not overcrowded. This service was a very good one until it was taken over by the company. It was previously conducted by a lady who was a manageress, and without doubt was able to provide an efficient and comfortable service for the travelling public. The service was the admiration of all who used it, and the suburbs served by it developed rapidly because of the care and attention she gave to the requirements of the public. Then it was taken over by a company, and now it is one of the most disgraceful services to be found in any city.

Mr. Nankivell told the Transport Board that he was unable to get drivers. To show how inconsistent are his statements and how he will deliberately lie, within one month of his having made that statement to the board he took off the best and most experienced driver on the run, Little Geoff., as he is known, made an inspector of him, and got another driver somewhere else. Little Geoff. had been a driver for nine or ten years. Why was he made an inspector? Was it because some of the male passengers were hanging on to the hooks outside the buses and refused to pay their fares? The inspector enforced the payment of the fares

and increased the dividends of the company. The service is in a deplorable condition. I do not know what power the Transport Board has, but with all due respect to the member for Canning, I say that the transport service to South Perth, even without the buses recently put on the additional route, was more efficient than that being given by this company.

The Government should seriously consider the question of putting some of its buses on to this run if only to assist the company in providing comfortable and efficient service to the people in that part, the ultimate idea being to take private buses off the road. It is not fair to expect people to travel constantly under the conditions I have described. Mr. Nankivell, who I understand is the traffic manager, can say what he likes, but he is not endeavouring to provide a proper service. His one motive evidently is to earn dividends for the shareholders. He could employ women to collect the fares and thus more expeditiously serve those suburbs, but he will not do so. To travel $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles occupies 45 to 50 minutes because the driver has to stop to collect the fares.

We never know when the driver wants to collect the fares, and this is where the trouble occurs. On entering these buses I have offered my fare to the driver and been told that a girl would be boarding the bus presently to collect the fares. No girl has boarded the bus, and the driver has had to stop at the Causeway for 15 or 20 minutes to collect the fares. In order to cheat the inspectors at the Perth terminus, the buses leave as nearly to time as possible, but they merely run into Riverside-drive and there stop for 20 minutes while the driver collects the fares. Such a bus could run the whole journey to Guildford in the time and be on its way back.

The company will not employ girls to collect the fares. The excuse given is that girls cannot be obtained. Since that statement was made, 80 or 90 girls have been employed as conductors on the trams, which goes to show that the company could get girls if it offered them a reasonable rate of pay. In fairness to the people living in those eastern suburbs, the Minister should take action. The existing state of affairs is deplorable and damnable, and the Government should not tolerate it any longer, even if it has to go to the extent of using some of its own vehicles on that run to relieve

the buses. I am glad the member for Middle Swan raised the question. His electors have protested bitterly and have been all too tolerant. An improvement could be made to the service even with the number of buses now engaged on the run.

The Minister should ascertain who it is that is preventing the "Bluebirds" from being transported to and from the Pearce Aerodrome by rail. If rail transport was used, quite a number of buses could be released from the service. If he considers the matter I think he will find that those responsible for the non-use of the railway are also responsible for the deplorable state of affairs that the people travelling by these buses have to tolerate.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands): Regarding the matter mentioned by the member for Murchison, 18 months or two years ago a suggestion was made that authority be obtained from the Midland Railway Company to run a coach to a station very close to the Pearce Aerodrome. Then a road could be constructed to the aerodrome and thus a great deal of petrol used to supply the present road service would be saved. A great deal of money would also be saved because the fare would be very much lower than the one necessarily charged for road transport. For some reason which I could never understand, the suggestion did not get beyond that stage. All that was needed was to negotiate with the Midland Railway Company in order to get authority to run a diesel coach from Midland Junction to the station on the Midland line near to the camp.

The Minister for Works: Do you mean one of the Government railway diesel coaches?

Hon. N. KEENAN: Yes. Are there any other diesels except the State-owned ones?

The Minister for Works: You suggest running it on the Midland Company's line?

Hon. N. KEENAN: Get authority to run a Government car on the Midland line.

Mr. Withers: For a consideration, of course.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I believe there was some difficulty about getting the necessary cars, but information given to me afterwards was to the effect that there was more than one diesel car available. Is not that so?

The Minister for Works: I cannot say. That is a railway matter.

Hon. N. KEENAN: However, I did not rise to deal with that matter which, I believe, is not within the province of the Minister for Works. If it is, the Minister for Works has a much wider responsibility than I ever dreamt of. Apparently he is responsible for the running of all the buses.

Member: It is the responsibility of the Transport Board.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The Transport Board does not run the buses; it gives certain rights to run buses, but, when that has been done, that is the end of the board's responsibility. I suppose the Minister will use his best offices, whatever the effect might be, to cure these deficiencies. I want to draw the Minister's attention to the provision of accommodation at schools, a matter that is within his province. The Education Department invariably takes advantage of the defence that it has asked for this accommodation to be made available but is itself choked off by the Public Works Department.

The Minister for Works: We spend funds as they become available.

Hon. N. KEENAN: There is some "passing of the buck" in this matter. When one goes to the Education Department, one is told, "We are strongly in favour of providing this accommodation. It is absolutely necessary, and long overdue. But the Works Department has not the plans, or has not the money, or will not do it." There are tradesmen available for work outside army work, which I admit of course must come first. But there are numbers of tradesmen who are not required by the army, either because they are too old, or if they still have the necessary skill lack the physique which the Army requires. Meanwhile at Nedlands the children are educated on the verandah from year's end to year's end.

Now the summer is approaching the position is not so bad, canvasses being hung. During the winter, however, not once or twice but on many occasions the children have been drenched by storms while they were in their classes. Meanwhile the "buck" is being passed. Nobody is responsible. I hope the Minister will take on himself the responsibility which is his, and see that this state of affairs does not continue from year's end to year's end. For the last five years the Nedlands school has had from 100 to 150 children more than there is accommoda-

tion for in the brick rooms. I remember once taking the Minister down to show him the position.

The Minister for Works: I was "Education" at that time.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Oh, the Minister was "passing the buck" on that occasion, was he? However, this is a very serious matter.

Mr. J. Hegney: You were at one time Minister for Education yourself, and I tried to get something done.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I do not remember that, and I have not a very short memory. It could not possibly have happened. However, we are not indulging in the usual recriminations, but I am indulging in the hope that the Minister will take the opportunity. There is little work to do and, subject to having funds which he can make available, this necessary work should be carried out. I assure the Minister that, if it is done, not only will the parents of the children and the children themselves be grateful, but I also will be grateful because it will save me a lot of worry which the member for the district must get when such things remain unremedied.

The Minister for Works: From what you say, another three rooms are required.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Two at least will be needed, and I cannot specify the size of the rooms. A suggestion was made even to the Education Department that it should at least get the Public Works Department to move some pagodas which are at the Rosalie school, and which are not wanted there. In all suburbs, regular stages are gone through. When they are first settled, young married people take up sites for homes. Gradually the children grow up, and schools are required. Now, there are pagodas at Shenton Park.

The Minister for Works: Pavilions!

Hon. N. KEENAN: They are called pagodas, for some reason. They are removable, and the cost of removal would be very limited. But of course Nedlands would much prefer to have brick buildings put up instead of temporary shelters. In wartime one should refrain from making any but urgent requests. I can assure the Minister that this is an urgent request, and has been an urgent request for many years.

[Mr. Marshall resumed the Chair.]

MR. NORTH (Claremont): I support the remarks of previous speakers regarding the State Transport Board. In the Claremont area our difficulty is chiefly that the buses will need renewal. If the war lasts for a considerable time longer, the problem in our district, and along the Perth-Fremantle road too, will be how long the vehicles will last. There are large stocks of spare parts, and spares are continually put in; but the fact remains that the lives of the buses are limited. As we have been successful in importing trolley buses from overseas during the war, I am hoping that before the war is over it will be possible for the Minister to import motor-bus chassis for the Claremont district. The only way in which this Chamber can deal with that request is by bringing under the attention of the Minister in charge of the Transport Board the urgent need for additional vehicles. The bus proprietors have not been irksome. They have not complained unduly. But the public is worrying because it is suffering from the extreme congestion. Moreover, buses suffer breakdowns, and these must happen more and more frequently as time goes on. I hope my request will receive full consideration.

Mr. Cross: One authority should control the entire transport of that area.

Mr. NORTH: All parties, I believe, agree on that point. Another matter highly significant at this juncture is the vote for unemployment. The amount provided is the lowest for a decade—£8,000. I desire to draw attention to the wonderful effect the war has had upon the unemployment problem, which in peace-time seemed insoluble. We cannot expect to go back to the peace-time days. I hope the Minister will remember that the unemployment Vote then went up to £100,000. The Child Welfare Vote, which appears later in the Estimates, also shows an enormous reduction. Surely this is the time to give consideration to that aspect. During peace-time we are unable to reduce the vote below £90,000. Now we have to find only the comparatively insignificant amount of £8,000 to meet that terrible hugbear of peace-time. In this connection I desire to quote a few remarks of an English Statesman, Sir William Beveridge, who, according to a report which appeared in "The West Australian" a few days ago, said that after the war there would have to be a change in the manner in which this

question was dealt with. What he said regarding Great Britain is surely of interest to us here. Here are some of his own words, under the heading of "Post War Planning; Security of Employment"—

Unemployment has been abolished twice in the lives of most of us, in this war and in the last one. Consideration of how this has been done suggests two main conditions for success in the maintenance of employment after the war—continuance of national planning and control and continuation of fluidity of labour and other resources. National planning does not mean the surrender of any essential citizen liberties. Whatever may suit other countries, the plan for Britain—

and I think for Australia too—

—must and can preserve freedom of opinion and its expression in public or private, in speech or writing; freedom of association for political and other purposes; freedom of movement and choice of occupations; personal property and an income of one's own with freedom to save or spend it. These are essential liberties.

Here is a striking utterance—

Private enterprise at private risk is a good ship and a ship that has brought us far. But it is a ship for fair weather and open seas. For the ice-bound straits of war and in finding a way out of them, a vessel of different and sturdier build is needed.

Mr. Doney called attention to the state of the Committee.

Bells rung and a quorum formed.

Mr. NORTH: That was all I desired to quote from Sir William Beveridge's speech as it affects the unemployment relief vote, the lowest we have had for at least ten years. The only other point I wish to raise—and I am now speaking on the Town Planning Vote—is whether any compensation can be obtained from the Commonwealth Government for damage due to war precautions in the areas administered by local authorities. At Cottesloe barbed wire entanglements have been erected at many places. One result of this was that when we had an election the other day a few enthusiasts who went to vote after dark got caught in the barbed wire and could not get to the booths!

Mr. Withers: That was unfair tactics!

Mr. NORTH: Not very much attention was paid to the election. There was only about a 25 per cent. vote, but the presence of the barbed wire made the position even less favourable. The erection of this barbed wire has had a serious effect on the seafront partly in my electorate and partly in the electorate of the member for North-East Fremantle. Local soil erosion has occurred

and the beautification work done in peacetime is being destroyed. A lot of money was spent on improving the road, planting grass and erecting a sea wall, but now an enormous amount of sand has been shifted. Three lorries have been working for months trying to clear up the mess due to the barbed wire having broken down the protection provided. I wonder whether some compensation is payable to the local authorities by the Commonwealth Government for damage such as that.

MR. McLARTY (Murray-Wellington): I was interested to hear the Minister, when introducing these Estimates, refer to investigations made in the Kimberleys regarding irrigation possibilities. It is fortunate we have an officer like Mr. Dumas to make such investigations. He has had a great deal of experience over the last few years in the construction of this dam, and generally in connection with investigations in irrigation areas. I know that at present we cannot very well ask for public works to be carried out, but the Minister would be wise to take notice of our requests. In the reconstruction period we will be looking for public works to employ our returned soldiers, and I do not think there is any doubt that the Public Works Department will prove to be the greatest employer of labour when peace comes. So I think the Minister would be wise not to discourage the requests of members who speak of the needs of their districts, but on the contrary to encourage them with a view to ascertaining what works are practicable and what should be put in hand in order of urgency.

Mr. Doney: Did you say the Government would be the greatest employer of labour?

Mr. McLARTY: I said I thought the Public Works Department would be one of the greatest employers during the post-war period.

Mr. Doney: If that is so, it is a poor outlook for the State.

Mr. McLARTY: If it is not the greatest employer, it will be one of the greatest employers of labour. I think the hon. member recognises that the Government will play a most important part in employment in that period. It has been previously suggested in this House that the Government should form a committee representative of all sections of this Chamber, and it should advise it in regard to public works. The time is

now opportune—it was never more so—to do that. All parties would appreciate such a gesture. The principal works that will be put in hand in the future are probably irrigation works in the North, to which the Minister has already referred. There are also incomplete irrigation works in the South-West portion of the State, which would employ a great deal of labour. Members will also advocate road construction in their districts. Personally I think we cannot have too many roads.

The more this country is crossed with roads, the better it will be. When I say that, I do not mean that every person who advocates that a road should be built should have it constructed. But road-building will undoubtedly absorb a lot of labour in the post-war period. There is, of course, sure to be an active building programme because buildings are urgently required. I was in the Agricultural Department today and could not help but think how urgently we required a new building for that department.

Mr. W. Hegney: It is the rabbit department!

Mr. McLARTY: I know there is not much prospect of that at present, but when the time arrives for activity by the Public Works Department I hope one of the first things to be tackled will be the erection of new Agricultural Department buildings. Members have spoken of the wants of their districts, and I have heard some reference to school buildings. I want to ask the Minister not to forget, if he has a building programme in connection with schools, that additions are urgently required in the Waroona district. The Minister knows that large irrigation works have been started there, and Nestle's factory has proved to be a big employer of labour and the district generally has advanced. Wherever we have such activity and a great influx of permanent population, provision should be made in regard to schools and other necessary public utilities. I therefore draw the Minister's attention to the urgency of the school requirements at Waroona, and hope he will see that high priority is given in his list to the requirements of that town.

MR. HILL (Albany): I have listened to the remarks of other speakers, and was interested in the statements of the members for Murchison and Middle Swan when they referred to a detail of our transport sys-

tem. Some two years ago I was in the Country Party room of the New South Wales Parliament House. I was asked, "Well, what can we do for you?" I said, "I would like to meet your Minister for Transport." The telephone rang and I was told, "He will be here in half-an-hour." I spent a couple of very interesting hours with that gentleman. A few months later I came here, and in this House I heard our Premier refer to his colleague, the Minister for Works, in his capacity as Minister for Transport. I must admit that I smiled to myself. I quite understand the remarks of members who dealt with the bus service to Pearce.

It is not of much use to go into details unless we build on a solid foundation. To deal with our transport satisfactorily we must have a sound administration. Here again I have to be careful, because our Minister for Works, who is also Minister for Transport, has under his control only our so-called Transport Board. I am afraid I shall be treading on dangerous ground when I suggest that I firmly believe that not only the transport should be under one Minister, but that here in the metropolitan area we should have all transport under one control.

Mr. Cross: Hear, hear!

Mr. HILL: I do not wish to deal further with this matter now because I am afraid I might be touching on the Railway Vote. I am pleased to see the activity that is taking place in my electorate. It is a great pleasure to see some of my dreams come true, but I hope the Minister will not do as one Minister did a few days ago. I was in the lobby of this building and shook hands with one of our Federal Ministers. Our State Minister was present when the Federal Minister said, "There is some activity at your end of the State." I said, "Yes, there is." Our State Minister interjected, "That is because you have a Labour Government in the Federal Parliament and also a Labour Government in the State Parliament." I said, "Get out; we have to thank John Bull and Uncle Sam! Please do not try to claim credit for what is being done for the benefit of the Allied Nations. I think, on the other hand, that Ministers should be rather ashamed of themselves."

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must not reflect on other members.

Mr. HILL: I will withdraw the remark if the Chairman wishes.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I want the hon. member to understand that he must not reflect on members.

Mr. HILL: It is regrettable that it has taken a war to bring about that state of affairs. For obvious reasons I will not discuss the activity that is taking place, but I do appeal to the Minister to be careful and not make the mistakes which have been made in the past. I have some plans which show how some of our natural advantages could be developed to the benefit of the State, the Commonwealth and the Empire. If the Minister is sufficiently interested, I would be only too pleased to discuss them with him.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth): I have in mind a matter which I might preferably mention under the heading of Town Planning, as I do not know that there is a more appropriate place. I draw the attention of the Government to what has now become necessary, and that is some legislative provision to deal with the effect of war damage to buildings. The Commonwealth Government, through its National Security Regulations, and scheme for war damage, has made provision for insurance, but has left untouched the position as between landlord and tenant, or, where it is a longer term of occupancy, between lessor and lessee. I think, as the law now stands, that in the event of buildings being destroyed by enemy action, many lessees or tenants would be in an unfortunate position. I do not know of any provision to protect them from the liability to go on paying their rent even though the buildings have been destroyed, or partially destroyed, and rendered useless or almost useless from the point of view of occupancy. I cannot find the reference to that at short notice, but in at least one of the other States—New South Wales, I think—legislation has recently been brought down to deal with the position which exists between landlord and tenant, or lessor and lessee, in the case of buildings being destroyed or damaged by war causes.

The CHAIRMAN: I am assuming that the hon. member is referring to public buildings.

Mr. McDONALD: I am referring to buildings generally, under the heading of Town Planning. That means that buildings which are destroyed by enemy action will be the subject of some degree of Government supervision when the period of their reconstruction arrives. I will leave

the matter at that. If the Minister will take a note of what I have said and refer it to his Crown Law advisers, he might find an opportunity to make some legislative provision to meet the case where otherwise some injustice might be occasioned to tenants.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (in reply): Dealing with the references to the Public Works Department and the need for the renovation of schools and other public buildings, the Estimates show that £25,000 has been set aside under the heading of "buildings," and last year, when a similar amount was provided, the Vote was expended with the exception of just over £4,000. The Vote has to be very carefully administered, for there has never yet been sufficient money available to carry out all the necessary renovations and renewals. Each department, including the Education Department, submits its requirements. As the member for Nedlands said, the Education Department submits a list indicating the priority of work required by it. In due course the work is undertaken in the order mentioned. That applies also to renovations, which portion of the Vote is administered by the Education Department, although the Works Department undertakes the task. The instance cited by the member for Nedlands is not singular. I know of no district where school and other public buildings are not more or less in a state of disrepair.

Hon. N. Keenan: How much of the Vote was not spent last year?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The amount unspent was £4,126. That is almost wholly accounted for by the inability to secure men and materials with which to undertake the work. To indicate the position in that regard, we were anticipating cancelling a contract for a building at Barton's Mill, but such strong representations were made in favour of the work being carried out that we have managed to secure the services of a few carpenters so that it can proceed. Commonwealth work has created such a demand for men that their services are not available to the Public Works Department, which is starved for labour. I should say that that is the sole reason why the whole of the £25,000 was not spent last year. All I can promise regarding the school building at Nedlands is that I shall refer the matter to the Education Department and later on the

Minister who will submit the Estimates for that department will deal with that phase.

Mr. Patrick: I suppose applications for work go from the Education Department through the Treasury to the Public Works Department.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, each department submits its requirements. In my own district the schools are so overcrowded that in one instance the Parents and Citizens' Association wrote saying that its members were sending their children to private schools. As members are aware, the military authorities commandeered certain schools, but we are again to have the use of some of them. While the schools were commandeered, it meant that the Education Department had to make provision for the same number of children who had to be accommodated in the schools that remained. That difficulty has been overcome to a certain degree by staggering the hours for tuition, in consequence of which the young people do not get the same number of school hours now that they were formerly accustomed to.

Mr. Patrick: You have had an influx of women and children from the country districts.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, but I think the position will be remedied slightly very soon. Transport matters have been referred to by some members, although I am not quite sure that those comments were in order under this particular Vote. I am the Minister in charge of transport matters, but there is the Transport Board, the members of which are carrying out work for the Commonwealth as well. They act as the Liquid Fuel Control Board to which the ex-Leader of the Opposition was appointed, so that there are four members of the board dealing with liquid fuel problems. It is a busy department with an incredible volume of daily correspondence. It is probably the busiest concern in the State from the standpoint of interviews. Mr. Millen, the chairman of the board, attends to that phase, and frequently has to fly to the Eastern States to become acquainted with matters relating to Commonwealth policy.

The Transport Board deals with the licensing of services on the various routes, and has some say in fixing fares, which is usually dealt with by way of negotiations. Every effort is made to establish a reasonably efficient bus service on the various

routes. In order to achieve that end it is sometimes necessary to grant a monopoly. Take the position regarding Scarborough: In order to ensure a winter service, which is unpayable, it is necessary to grant a monopoly over the summer service. The Transport Board has done good work in connection with the fixing of fares. Complaints that have been voiced will be referred to the board, but I understand that in most instances the fares are regarded as reasonable. The point raised regarding town planning was interesting, and I know that phase was discussed with the Crown Law authorities at the time the Commonwealth instituted its voluntary insurance scheme. Admittedly, it was not a complete scheme, and I can visualise serious difficulties arising from the standpoint referred to by the member for West Perth. I should say that it is a matter of Australia-wide interest, but I shall make inquiries as to what has been done in New South Wales. We can look into the question as to whether legislation is necessary to protect people throughout the whole of the Commonwealth, in which case it would be a matter for the Commonwealth Government, especially as it would be a war-time measure. I shall, as requested by the member for West Perth, refer the matter to the Crown Law Department.

Mr. McDonald: There is a fair amount of apprehension amongst people who are in the position of tenants in the metropolitan area, so that that would be helpful.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I can certainly visualise difficulties between lessors and lessees should anything happen. I shall refer complaints that have been made to the appropriate departments and am hopeful that in future we shall have a larger provision for renovations, in which respect a crop of applications is being lodged all the time.

There is the matter of water supply installations in Government buildings, and only today I had a complaint about electrical installations. In some of the buildings where the electrical installation becomes faulty, it has to be put in order immediately. All those things have to be provided for out of this Vote. If there is one vote which will need close attention and an increase of which would be justified, it is the vote for renovations. In the old Government buildings electrical installations must be renewed. The member for Subiaco promised not to

make a complaint if I undertook to see that attention was given to the Thomas-street school. Only today I was discussing the matter with the Under Secretary, and we realised that a stage had been reached when the water supply must be attended to. The member for Williams-Narrogin complained that the Public Works Department was incompetent.

Mr. Doney: Did I say that?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. The hon. member said, "God help us if the Public Works Department does it. It should be done by private enterprise."

Mr. Doney: You missed the point of my interjection.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There are two notable works in the Great Southern districts that were carried out by the Public Works Department.

Mr. Doney: I know all about them.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Main Roads Department was employed to do the surfacing work for the water catchments; there was no one else in the State that those concerned would trust to do it. Mine is not a cheap and nasty department. The work we do is done in a competent manner. I will not claim that it is a cheap department, but it provides an example of how a job should be done. The Government Architect has stated that although the first cost of buildings might be greater, the maintenance charges are lower. That is something in favour of departmentally constructed work.

Mr. Patrick: That is what we are told by the Education Department—that the Works Department cannot do it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am pleased with the reception accorded to my Estimates and will give attention to all the questions that have raised.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Town Planning, £1,713—agreed to.

Vote—Unemployment Relief and State Labour Bureau, £8,600:

Item, Salaries and allowances, etc., £3,100.

Mr. DONEY: Is there any justification for the expenditure of £3,100 on salaries and £8,600 for the department. Surely there cannot be much work to be done now! I suggest that the department be closed down. There is no justification for unemployment in these days, and the small amount of work necessary could surely be transferred to some other appropriate department.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: A very drastic cut has been made in expenditure, but this department cannot die out at once, especially as it is still doing work for the Commonwealth.

Mr. Doney: In providing work for the unemployed?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: In introducing the Estimates I pointed out that we have men being paid by the department who are really employed by the Commonwealth, and we will make a claim for the salaries of some of them. Already we have been reimbursed for the salaries of those actually taken over by the Commonwealth. There is still a Department of Employment; it has been taken over by the Commonwealth. Our policy has been that whenever the Commonwealth has desired the services of a State officer and he can be spared, he is made available. This applies to the chairman of the Transport Board, but though Mr. Millen's services have been made available, and he is practically employed solely on Commonwealth work in connection with liquid fuel, we pay his salary. That is something we are doing to assist the Commonwealth.

Hon. N. Keenan: You will get a recoup for that?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Not for his salary. The same thing applies to other officers, but in most instances we are claiming recoups from the Commonwealth. The estimate of £2,500 for unemployment relief is £2,124 less than the actual expenditure for last year. This is due to the fact that unemployment relief is now confined to sick and physically unfit single men, a proportion being sick aliens who, for various reasons, cannot qualify for an invalid pension and have therefore become a charge upon the State. The majority obtaining relief are temporary cases only and are indigent persons discharged from hospital who, for a short period, have to be looked after by the State.

Mr. Doney: How many of such would there be, five, 10 or 100?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Quite a fair number. I repeat that a department such as this cannot die out at once and that there has been a drastic cut in the expenditure. I am hopeful that it will not be necessary to spend the amount shown in the Estimates, especially if we can get refunds from the Commonwealth.

Mr. DONEY: I quite agree with the propriety of lending men to the Commonwealth Government, but the Minister's explanation does not quite cover the ground of my complaint. The Commonwealth Government is in no way concerned with the employment of men coming under this Vote, men who would be largely unemployable. Even if a considerable number of unemployed is concerned here, they must by now, by reason of their low number and the similarity of treatment, have become easy to control. The amount apparently to be laid out on these men during the coming year, £2,500, represents a small disbursement, and yet the amount set aside for handling that disbursement is £3,100. If there are other duties represented by that sum of £3,100, they are not shown here.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Salaries for the current year represent a reduction of £5,000 on the previous year's estimate, and a reduction of £2,555 on the actual expenditure for last year. The salaries estimate for the current year includes six permanent and three temporary officers employed in the National Service Department; and negotiations are now in course with a view to the salaries of these officials being paid by the Commonwealth Government as from the 1st July last. The salaries of four of the Employment Department's officials who were officially seconded on loan to the Commonwealth have been paid by the Commonwealth Government from the dates of transfer. The Clerk in charge of Records, Mr. Mather, whose salary of £442 is included in these Estimates, is on loan as secretary of the Soldiers' Dependants' Council; but his salary is still being paid from the Employment Department's Vote. Before long the costs of this department will be further reduced.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Lands and Surveys, £56,900:

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS [4.44]: Having spoken for two hours already when introducing these Estimates and delivering the Budget, and in the course of that speech having dealt with many subjects pertaining to matters within my purview, I do not intend to address the Committee at great length on these Lands Estimates. I do, however, intend to speak at length when introducing the Estimates of the Department of

Agriculture, because of matters which are war-caused and which are the responsibility of that department. In the Lands Department at present, very great activity is taking place because of the demands of special work for the various services. Particularly is that so with the surveys and drafting sections. In connection with the surveys section many members of the staff are in the field actively engaged in military work only. Eight survey parties are doing urgent work for defence purposes in connection with aerodromes and topographical drafting for the Australian Survey Corps. Further, in many parts of the State members of the surveys section are helping the Army with its map requirements.

The progress of normal survey work in the Lands Department is, naturally, to some extent being neglected, and many important aspects and requirements of that department have had to be suspended. At present five surveyors are serving with the Forces; and to retain some of those who are essential even in the carrying-out of work allied to the war, it has been necessary to man-power several essential officers. It is well known that throughout all branches of the State Public Service there have been heavy enlistments; and in departments such as the Lands—where the majority of officers are specialists—many difficulties in administration have arisen. In a general way, in the Lands Department we continue with such matters as the re-pricing of conditional purchase areas, readjustment of prices in other areas, and bringing down prices to levels considered to be commensurate with the productive capacity of the land and the altered circumstances according to experiences in the various districts.

In connection with pastoral matters, although it is highly pleasing to report that a big season has been experienced in almost every district, unfortunately it is almost impossible to take advantage of the excellent season. Re-stocking is almost an impossibility, and traffic from pastoral areas which have no rail communication has been very seriously curtailed. Even in spite of the small numbers of sheep in our northern pastoral areas, many fat wethers would have been available for the southern markets had circumstances of transport been different.

It is unfortunate also, as mentioned in the course of the Budget Speech or on the Address-in-reply, that the effect of blow-

flies during the season has been alarming indeed. There is no doubt that the numbers lost by the ravages of blowfly in our pastoral districts, from the Murchison to the North-West, amounts to a figure approaching 400,000 sheep, a loss comparable to annual losses in the worst years of the drought. On sheep that are fat and in full wool, as you, Mr. Chairman, will know, the effect is most detrimental against the ewe. Any sheep at all that carried moisture in the wool has had very little chance during this flush season in the pastoral districts, where the growth is two and three feet high, where the herbage has almost smothered some of the natural growth which used to be the top feed in better days. Thus it is a calamity for the State that in the first year which gave a prospect of recovery by perhaps a double lambing in the one year, the ewes are being so seriously affected that the prospects of the pastoralists are no better than, and in fact in the case of some pastoralists not as good as, during the drought years.

The Government has given the usual consideration and attention in respect to pastoral lease rents, and the board considering these matters regularly receives applications from pastoralists in different parts of the State, and gives consideration to the claims submitted, even though there has been a temporary improvement in the season. Figures were given to the Committee, when the Budget was introduced, which afforded a clear indication of the severity of the drought and of the severity of its aftermath. Other aspects of the Lands Department's activities, such as the occupation of Crown lands by Military authorities, have also been given considerable attention by the Surveyor General. One matter that comes within the purview of this Vote is the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act and the Rural Relief Trustees. There has recently been some comment in this House in regard to the continuation of the services of the trustees. It is incumbent on the State, under the Commonwealth Act, and the measure passed in this House to supplement that Act, that there shall be a continuation of the Rural Relief Trustees during the currency of that Act and the availability of money under it.

Mr. Watts: Are three of them needed?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The secretary of the Rural Relief Trustees is also

one of them, as the Leader of the Opposition knows, and there are still a great number of matters to be considered, day by day and week by week, by the trustees. At the last Premiers' Conference and Loan Council meeting, we were able, as I think the Leader of the Opposition knows, to get an additional sum for the trustees to operate from during this year, and I have been hoping for two or three years that there would be an opportunity for more money to be repaid to the trustees to enable further consideration to be given to pastoral debts, in addition to farmers' debts, from this fund. The staff has been tremendously reduced in comparison with the days when there was considerable activity. During 1936-37, the employees totalled 29. Today the total is eight, including two trustees, the third being the director who, as members know, has a considerable amount of detail to attend to in regard to mortgages and claims that come before the trustees.

Mr. Doney: Are they disbursing any funds? Are there any funds to disburse?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: From memory I think the figure agreed to at the last Loan Council meeting was £26,000 for this State for the adjustment of debts, and the accounts of farmers that had been compounded and are awaiting settlement; and a considerable number will be attended to because of the availability of this money. I had intended to address myself to many matters in connection with manpower, but because of the impending arrival of the Governor-General at the House very shortly, I think it would be better for me to deal with that subject later. I intend to do so at some length on the Estimates of the other department. Although the activities of the Lands and Agricultural Departments appear to be closely interwoven, there is specific work attaching to the Lands Department which the war has increased rather than lessened, and which has very little, if anything, to do with the other technical department, which deals solely with production. I would, however, refer for a moment to the question raised in this Chamber by the member for Avon and the member for Mt. Marshall in regard to the infestation of grasshoppers.

This is something that has been giving me great concern for several years, because I think the future settlement policy and successful occupation of many of our outer

areas is circumscribed by the increasing ravages of that pest in some parts. I have evolved a plan that I think will achieve something in determining the future of those lands. It involves a very complete inquiry not merely by officers of the different departments, including land settlement officers, officers of the Agricultural Bank and of the Lands Department, and entomologists, but also experienced farmers who will be invited to confer in the hope that we shall obtain a better understanding as to the immediate requirements, and the prospect of formulating a long-range policy to occupy successfully that outer territory.

I understand a meeting is to be called at Merredin in regard to this matter on Saturday. Unfortunately I shall not be able to attend, but I have sent a very long document for the consideration of the meeting. The member for Avon was very critical of the fact that a sum of £500 was all that appeared on the Estimates in this connection. I would remind him that when the greatest effect of this scourge was felt in this State, and only £2,000 or £3,000 appeared on the Estimates, we spent in one year over £20,000. We are prepared to take every step we consider advisable and necessary to meet immediate needs. I do not wish to prolong my remarks on these Estimates, but desire to speak at greater length on the next Estimates, when I will deal with the question of manpower and attendant matters.

Vote put and passed.

Votes — Farmers' Debts Adjustment, £2,774; Agricultural Bank, Industries Assistance Board, Soldiers' Land Settlement, £5—agreed to.

Progress reported.

BILL—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 20th October.

MR. DONEY (Williams - Narrogin) [4.59]: I have no objection to the second reading of this Bill. The three provisions were explained by the Minister in a way that made them quite acceptable to me. They appear desirable, and indeed could hardly be regarded as otherwise by the administrative authorities concerned, because, as I understand the position, they besought the Minister to in-

introduce the Bill. The first provision empowers councillors to be honorary treasurers without incurring disqualification for so acting. That is a decided improvement upon the existing position and no objection to it has been raised anywhere that I know of. The next alteration provides that the dismissal of a paid officer of the council must be contingent upon the Minister's concurrence. I understand there have been numbers of cases where personal feelings entered into the question dealt with by that clause, and where an officer, who has in the opinion of some people been satisfactory, has been dismissed for purely personal reasons. It is right and proper in these circumstances that he should have some authority to which he can appeal. I regard that provision as quite desirable.

Mr. Watts: Is there not a similar provision in the Road Districts Act?

Mr. DONEY: I believe there is. That portion of the Bill is, therefore, in keeping with the Minister's desire to make the two Acts amenable to the same authority.

Mr. Sampson: That is in relation to secretaries.

Mr. DONEY: It would be in relation to the secretary, health officer, surveyor, engineer, or, indeed, any official of that type employed by road boards and municipalities.

The Minister for Works: It is in connection with the ones who actually come into contact with the councillors.

Mr. DONEY: The Minister made that clear when introducing the Bill. I did not think any question would arise on that point. The other provision is one to give the Minister the right to postpone the date of the annual meeting of ratepayers. Most members who know anything at all about the subject will understand that as the annual meeting and the holding of the elections occur during the same month, namely, November, it very frequently—in fact, almost on every occasion—happens that the council employees—the town clerk and his assistants—find considerable difficulty in getting out the balance sheet and reports, and having them audited within the very few days allowed to them for that purpose. I have no objection to any of the provisions of this measure; on the contrary I am glad the Minister has brought this

Bill down because its provisions have been asked for by the authorities over a long period.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

MOTION—POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION.

To inquire by Select Committee.

Debate resumed from the 16th September on the following motion by Mr. Watts:—

That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into, and submit proposals for, post-war reconstruction in Western Australia, with particular reference to ways and means of securing a greater measure of equality of opportunity, and the best possible standard of living for all the people with continuity of employment, and the necessary increase in the State's population, and as means of attaining those objectives to consider—

- (a) the possibilities of land settlement as a means of repatriation;
- (b) the reshaping of agricultural policy so as to offer prospects of success to those engaged in rural industry;
- (c) the fostering of secondary industries so as to make the best use of the State's raw materials, and provide employment;
- (d) the desirability of appointing a Minister for Reconstruction;
- (e) any other proposals considered helpful.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [5.7]: I desire very shortly to support this important motion. The hon. member who introduced it covered the ground so clearly and fully that I intend only to make a few suggestions so as to add to the scope of the inquiry. I do not wish to hamper or hamstring it by adding amendments, but merely to aid the course suggested in the original proposals. The first suggestion I have to make is that if we are to have post-war reconstruction on sound lines we should include a measure of Parliamentary reform. That ideal is the subject a lot of discussion in Great Britain. If we are to give effect to this motion we must inquire into that aspect. It cannot be done in the next two or three weeks of this session, but if this motion is carried one must assume that the committee appointed will carry on into the next Parliament, if there is one, or under this Parliament if it is continued.

We have now reached the stage in Parliamentary reform when people feel that there should be some power in the opposition to give effect to certain measures. During the past decades we have been limited in our powers due to the fact that over and over again members carry resolutions which cannot be enforced. The matter is more complicated by the fact that resolutions are sometimes given effect to, and the electors afterwards feel, when they see a resolution of their member carried, that they are being fooled. It would be easy to have the Standing Orders amended in some way to deal with that question and enable the Government to show its hand, where although it passes a resolution it does not approve of it. By so agreeing to a resolution the members of the public in the months to follow feel that they are being fooled. I have seen motions carried in regard to railway construction, and I could mention dozens of other cases—

Mr. Sampson: Instances in connection with the break of gauge.

Mr. NORTH: —where no action has followed; and on the contrary I have seen motions carried and action has followed. That puts the unsuccessful members in a bad light. The time may come when the present Government will be in opposition, and any improvement on the lines I suggest will be as much to its advantage as to ours. Again with regard to the improvement of our present Parliamentary system, we should have in our midst a representative with scientific qualifications able to guide us in our deliberations. If members have regard to the composition of the Legislature, they will appreciate the fact that, over and over, again there has been a large influx of representatives of specific sections. We have had farmers and business men and lawyers—in profusion. In addition, we have many representatives of industrial unions and others experienced in labour problems.

Mr. Watts: Do you suggest we should not have lawyers?

Mr. NORTH: No, but the Leader of the Opposition will agree that we hardly ever have an engineer as a member of this House and seldom have we a doctor. Certainly we now have one in another place, and that is quite an event. It would be a good move if the Select Committee were to give some consideration to our present system of Parliamentary representation with a view to

ensuring that seats were allocated to the professions. We should have at least one engineer in the House. He need not have a vote but he should receive a salary in return for his membership of the House, and for his work in keeping us on the right track regarding engineering problems. We should have, in addition, a scientific expert and others of similar capacity in other walks of life.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: What about a housewife who would represent the consumers?

Mr. Withers: They are represented now!

Mr. NORTH: I shall not stress this phase over-much, but I certainly think we could improve the calibre of this Chamber if we had sectional representatives such as I have indicated. I would go further and say that the civil servants—I do not know that they would approve of the scheme—should have a representative in this House. He should be elected by them so as to voice the opinions of the civil servants, who would not then feel, as they do now, that they can only hope to do the best they can to get what is possible from the Government of the day. It would be far better if they had their own representative on the floor of the House. An alteration in our Parliamentary procedure could go far in achieving better results if microphones were installed in the Chamber and selected debates were broadcast.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is getting rather far from the subject-matter of the motion, which contains nothing about broadcasting debates.

Mr. NORTH: If you think, Mr. Speaker, that the matters I am dealing with are not within the scope of the motion, I shall not trespass upon your generosity, particularly as you always allow me so much latitude. If a Select Committee is to be appointed, there should certainly be an overhaul of Parliamentary procedure to bring it into line with modern conditions in many respects. The fact that we have not had the advice of an engineer to guide us has been a terrible blunder that has continued during the past 20 years.

Mr. W. Hegney: To what type of engineer do you refer?

Mr. NORTH: The Speaker will not allow me to proceed further along those lines. It is a fact, however, that during that period we have made gross blunders which could have been avoided had we been able to have

an engineer amongst us. Another matter I wish to associate with the motion—I am sure members will agree with me—is that the question of transportation should be included in the review that is sought. The motion deals only with secondary industries and agriculture, but it also has a drag-net clause. I am sure the member for Katanning, who moved the motion, would not object to the transport problem being investigated. The last point I make and the most vital of all, is that the inquiry should also deal with our economic policy. For many years I have heard in this House diatribes indulged in by members who have abused and ridiculed those they described as “tight-rope walkers”—the people who dodged political issues. Since I have been in this Chamber, I have seen various members change their political camps. Labour members have become Nationalists and Nationalists have joined the Labour Party.

There is, however, a much more important trapeze artist or tight-rope walker who should be brought to book. He is the man who is always changing his colour regarding economic problems. That is the gentlemen we should get hold of. I should like to be sure that the Select Committee, if appointed, will conduct a very thorough investigation of the present policy of business, financial and other interests throughout Australia regarding post-war economics. Are we to have displayed the same attitude that was in evidence in 1919 or will there be a more desirable attitude? In 1919 it was thought that, as the war was over, we should slow down almost to the point of closing down completely on our economic activities and the restoring of the unemployment problem, and all that goes with it. Since those days there has been some very hard thinking. Not only has that been indulged in by the London “Times” but also by the British Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, who is known as the “old war horse” and formerly was certainly not, by repute, deeply interested in economic problems. Not only has there been hard thinking on their part, but they have carefully expressed the view that the problem of post-war employment must be tackled seriously.

If the Select Committee is to be appointed and is to carry out its task either next session or later in the life of this Parliament, I trust it will make a thorough investigation regarding the attitude towards economic

questions adopted by business firms and financial institutions, in respect of a progressive outlook along those lines when the war is ended. The London “Times” has definitely seen the light, and so has Mr. Churchill. I shall conclude my remarks by quoting their views. I shall disclose that all the work during the past 10 years of some members of this House—we all know who they are—has been endorsed 100 per cent. by both the London “Times” and by Mr. Churchill. That is certainly encouraging, but even that will not be sufficient for the Leader of the Opposition because he will require to be definitely assured, before he commences his task of investigation, that he and his fellow-members on the Select Committee will not be hamstrung by big interests that will oppose improvements to conditions which may be sought as a result of the inquiry. When I quote from the London “Times” of the 25th March last, members can take the statements of such a journal on trust, seeing that it is said to be the leading newspaper of the world. I do not refer to its circulation, which, when I last checked up on that phase, was only about twice that of “The West Australian,” but from the standpoint of policy. The “Times” comment was as follows:—

In war-time the only limits on production are those set by the available manpower and raw materials. It is financed by credits which, although they are issued by the banks in the form of loans, are really national credits owing their value not to any stocks of bullion held by the banks, but to the capacity of the country to provide the goods and services for which its currency constitutes a claim. We should, it is argued, avoid nightmares of depression and unemployment if we frankly adopted this principle in peace as well as in war, and make the consequential changes in our financial system.

Mr. Churchill, in describing the situation at the end of the 1914-18 war and the sudden change which occurred at 11 o'clock on the 11th November, 1918, had this to say—

A requisition, for instance, for half-a-million houses would not have seemed more difficult to comply with than those we are already in process of executing for 100,000 aeroplanes or 20,000 guns or the medium artillery of the American Army, or 2,000,000 tons of projectiles. But a new set of conditions began to rule from 11 o'clock onwards. The money cost, which had never been considered by us to be a factor capable of limiting the supply of the armies, asserted a claim to priority from the moment the fighting stopped.

This reversion to the traditional money criterion has a limit on production and employment for which the real resources of organisation, labour, and capital equipment were available in plenty was possibly the master blunder, from which have flowed in inevitable sequence all the frustrations and miseries of the past 20 years.

We are not likely to solve our post-war problems unless we make up our minds to treat money as a book-keeping technique to facilitate the production and exchange of goods and services, not as something the supply of which sets a fixed upper limit to our productive activities. It plays much the same part in economic life as railway tickets play in transportation. It is dishonesty, akin to inflation, to issue tickets for more trains than can be run. It is absurd to cut down the railway service because the ticket office has run short of tickets.

Getting away from mere generalisations, the London "Times" concluded with another very important passage to clinch the argument. On the 24th March, 1942, the following appeared:—

By the agreement signed on the 23rd February, the British and American Governments have laid down the principles which are to govern their future economic policy in pursuit of the objectives set out in the Atlantic Charter: "Improved labour standards, economic advancement and social security."

I have quoted those remarks to establish the fact that there are people who walk the tight-rope as regards economic principles and conditions. They tell us in one breath that after the war there is going to be a depression, that we shall have lower standards of living, that we must open our markets to the world, close local industries and import everything we need under free trade conditions, tighten our belts and be generally miserable. As against those views, I suggest there is a very different attitude. I trust that the motion, if carried, will include provision for a full inquiry as to where we stand with our higher economic authorities and the attitude they adopt towards the questions before Parliament.

On motion by Mr. Doney, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER [5.22]: As leaders of parties will be attending the opening of the austerity campaign on Tuesday afternoon next and as a number of other members will desire to take part in the proceedings, I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday next at 3 p.m.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.23 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 3rd November, 1942.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 3 p.m., and read prayers.

MOTION—URGENCY.

Gas-Producers.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly) [3.5]: Mr. Speaker, I beg to read a letter of today's date which I have addressed to you—

In view of the fact that motor owners are being subjected to financial loss through the sale of imported gas-producers, which are made from inferior material, and also because the competition of these gas-producers is detrimental to the success of our Western Australian manufacturers, I intend, with your permission, to move the adjournment of the House at today's sitting.

The matter is of extreme urgency, because hundreds of motor owners have been ordered to have gas-producers fitted to their vehicles within the next few weeks, and because, too, I am in possession of information which was not available to me when I spoke on this matter two weeks ago; and unless action is taken quickly many motor owners will be involved in financial loss, while the danger from severe bush fires may be considerably increased.

MR. SPEAKER: It will be necessary for seven members to rise in their places to support the proposal of the member for Pingelly.

Several members having risen in their places,

MR. SEWARD: When speaking on the Annual Estimates a few weeks ago I had something to say about gas-producers, and the effect which unfair competition from the Eastern States was having on our local manufacturers. Since then further information has reached me, and I am convinced that unless effectual steps are taken in the near future to protect possible purchasers from some of the imported units of Eastern States manufacture our motor drivers, and particularly country owners of utilities and trucks, will be subjected to financial loss. From that aspect I shall give