

## Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 12th August, 1911.

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

### QUESTION—DROUGHT RELIEF.

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Have instructions been issued by the head office, Agricultural Bank, to branch managers—(a) That wheat certificates for season 1940-41 held by Agricultural Bank clients who have received assistance from drought relief funds must be surrendered to the bank regardless of whether the client has paid its statutory claims or not, and that the proceeds of such wheat dividends will be used to repay drought relief advances? (b) That in the case of Agricultural Bank clients, the proceeds of wheat crops for the 1941-42 season are to be paid to the Agricultural Bank where the money required for carrying-on purposes for the following season will be made available to the client, and any surplus money used in repayment of drought relief moneys? (c) That in the case of Associated Bank clients the whole proceeds of 1941-42 wheat crops are to be paid to the Agricultural Bank to be used to liquidate drought relief advances? (d) That moneys earned by Agricultural Bank clients, assisted from drought relief funds, from such outside work as shearing, etc., are to be paid to the Agricultural Bank and not retained by the client? 2, If such instructions have been issued, will the Minister state under what authority such action has been taken seeing that, under the terms attaching to the granting of the drought relief funds by the Commonwealth Government, no repayment of principal or interest is due during the first year? 3, If question No. 1 is answered in the negative, what instructions relative to the matters mentioned in that question have been issued by head office of the Agricultural Bank?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, (a) No. (b) No. Each case will be reviewed on its merits. If, after paying statutory claim, there are insufficient funds to

carry on for the following year, advances will be made from drought relief to supplement the balance of requirements. (c) No. Associated Banks considered it impossible to formulate a programme on farmers' operations for more than one year in advance and insisted that each case be reviewed after harvest. (d) No. 2, It was left in the hands of the State Government to be responsible for the repayment to the Commonwealth Government of moneys advanced. The State Government, after reviewing the case year by year, will continue to re-advance moneys at the low rate of interest obtained from the Commonwealth Government. 3, No.

### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

*Fifth Day.*

Debate resumed from the 7th August.

MR. McLARTY (Murray-Wellington) [4.38]: We all agree with what His Excellency said about our men who are in the fighting forces, and particularly those serving oversea. Since we met last week the war position, so far as Australia is concerned, has become more serious and is causing all of us the gravest concern. I feel sure we all regret that, owing to the present situation, the Prime Minister was prevented from making his trip to Western Australia. We do not often have the opportunity to hear our Prime Minister, and I know there are many people inside and outside of Perth who were disappointed that he was unable to continue his journey to this State.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: A War Council member evidently considered that he could have continued on to Perth.

Mr. McLARTY: I know there are certain authorities who think he should never leave Melbourne or Sydney, but most of us would like to welcome him here.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: There was evidently no need for him to stop.

Mr. Thorn: Who are you to say that?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. McLARTY: In regard to our war effort I wish we could even things up a bit more. I feel that most people are doing their best to help in that effort. But there are some who could do more. While we adhere to the present system of raising money by loan and by patriotic effort, there will always be some people who



will not pull their weight. Therefore the suggestion of Professor Keynes to introduce a system of compulsory saving has much to commend it. The men who are serving in the forces overseas have deferred pay to collect when the war is over, and I cannot see why they should be treated differently from people who remain at home. The British Government has adopted Professor Keynes's suggestion, and all sections of the people, irrespective of party, have accepted it.

We are all pleased that large quantities of war requirements are being manufactured in this State. According to Senator Collett, greater quantities will be turned out in future. I agree with the member who said that we should receive a larger share of the production of armaments, and I hope that that increased share will soon be given us. An interesting passage in the Speech stated that great care was being taken to ensure that factories at present engaged in munition work would be capable of adaptation to peace-time requirements. That is a sound policy, and I hope the Minister for Labour will be able to tell us more about it. Another item of interest to members representing country constituencies was the statement that every effort was being made to produce sulphur and phosphatic rock requirements in the State. I am sure the Government will do everything possible to encourage those enterprises. If they can supply our needs, the State will reap great advantage. Another item referred to was post-war planning, but the Speech gave very little indication of what is proposed—

Mr. Warner: No, or who is to do it.

Mr. McLARTY:—or of absorbing our soldiers when they return from the war. Mention has been made of secondary industries; efforts are being exerted to establish secondary industries here, and I give the Government and the Minister credit for what has been done. A considerable amount of energy has been shown by the department. Still, we have to remember that in manufacturing secondary commodities, some only will be absorbed in the State, while others will have to be exported and compete with the products of other countries. I suggest to the Minister controlling the department that he make more use of members of Parliament for investigating ways and means of encouraging secondary industries in the State. The Leader of the Opposition told us that we were the second highest taxed State in Aus-

tralia. Unfortunately that is true, and it is a considerable handicap to us when we seek to establish secondary industries. I believe that anomalies in the Workers' Compensation Act also tend to retard the development of secondary industries. I do not advocate that the workers should be deprived of the compensation to which they are entitled when they are injured in industry, but there are undoubtedly abuses of the Act that increase the burden on industry. Steps should be taken to eliminate them. If the Minister accepted my suggestion and appointed a parliamentary committee to investigate the matter, I believe that useful results would follow.

I am afraid that secondary industries are not being developed quickly enough to absorb large numbers of our men when they return from the war, but I hope that impression is wrong. However, other means will have to be found to provide work for those men. After the 1914-18 war a big land settlement scheme was adopted, but seemingly we shall not be able to absorb large numbers of returned men in land settlement on this occasion. On the return of our soldiers in 1919, many of them went into the wheatbelt and into the pastoral areas, but judging by present indications, it would not be advisable to settle returned men in the wheatbelt or send them into the pastoral areas. I assume that a certain amount of land settlement will take place, but I suggest that an active policy of public works be prepared. Doubtless the Deputy Premier will tell us that he is willing to prepare anything provided the finance is available. I think the requisite finance will be available. I cannot believe that money will tighten after this war to the extent it did after the other war, and I do not think the people would submit to such a tightening of money again. They know that millions of money are being provided daily for carrying on the war, and grave danger might arise if, when peace is declared, money were not made available to employ our men and carry on the development of the country.

I have some constructive suggestions to offer. One of the first things we should do is to carry out a vigorous housing scheme. I favour the taking of a census of the people requiring homes. I do not know of any safer way in which to invest money than in the building of a house. I



agree with the member for Avon (Mr. Boyle) in what he told us last session, that not only should decent housing be provided for people in the towns and cities, but that those engaged in primary pursuits should also be considered when such a scheme is being put into operation. We have our own timber, our own bricks, and I know of no better or safer scheme in which to invest money than in this direction. Another public work I would advocate is a vigorous policy of road construction. When peace is restored, the supplies of petrol will be resumed and the full tax will be paid. No additional burden will be placed upon the taxpayers of the State. The more roads we have, the better will it be for us. The indications are that transport costs will be greatly changed when peace comes. When one meets a man who has a gas producer and declares that he can run his vehicle a considerable distance for only a few pence, one begins to wonder what the future of transport will be. It seems to me that transport will be cheapened to such an extent in the future that it will not be necessary for us to engage in further railway construction, but that it will be better for us to provide good roads and cheap motor transport. I was glad to notice that the east-west road has been commenced, and do not know why it was not started many years ago.

The Minister for Mines: Because there was no war then.

Mr. McLARTY: The Minister is probably right. The work is a sound one, and no doubt is justified. Credit ought to be given to the newspapers which advocated this work very vigorously over an extended period.

Mr. Sampson: The "Daily News."

Mr. McLARTY: The "Daily News" in particular. It is strange that the road was not started until that paper had done the spade work. I also suggest that money be spent on deep sewerage in certain towns. That would not mean an added burden to the taxpayer. It has been suggested in the House that we should have the broader railway gauge between Perth and Kalgoorlie. That is a work of national importance, and should be undertaken. The extension of electricity to rural areas is another work that will pay for itself. Re-

cently the Minister for Labour and the Minister for Commerce, of the Federal Government, were considering a scheme for the extension of electricity to rural areas, and I understand were prepared to find the necessary money. Such a work commends itself to me, and I hope something can be done about it. When I saw the report in the "West Australian," I wrote to the Minister for Railways and asked him to get into touch with the Federal authorities, with a view to ascertaining whether something in that direction could be done in this State, particularly in my electorate.

Mr. Thorn: Why are you so parochial?

Mr. McLARTY: Although I am advancing these proposals and I feel they are perhaps not original, as no doubt the Deputy Premier has heard them all before, I think they are well worthy of attention. As it is our duty to prepare for peace, I hope the House will give these matters some consideration.

Another suggestion is that with the help of the Federal Government something more might be done for the development of the northern parts of the State. That is too big a problem for the State Government to tackle, but with the help of the Federal authorities it should be possible to do something there. As is generally known, the farmers are in difficulties to-day. The member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Tonkin) last week referred to the new order about which we have been hearing so much, and about which there are so many divergent views. If that new order is to achieve its object, one thing it must do is to see that our primary producers are placed on a sound footing. Farmers are suffering from many disabilities to-day. The shortage of labour is one of their most acute problems. I feel that in that respect they are not receiving justice, and Parliament should give them some special consideration. Apart from that question, farmers have recently had to face increased costs. Taxation has gone up, there has been a great increase in the price of superphosphate, and transport charges have risen materially. Against these things, the price of farm products has not risen. Unfortunately a farmer has no Arbitration Court to give him an increase in the price of his products when the costs of production have risen. In the last war, butterfat rose to 2s.



per pound, and milk to 1s 8d. per gallon. I do not know that costs in this war are any greater than they were on the last occasion.

Mr. Thorn: They are less.

Mr. McLARTY: There is a drift of young men from the land. Those who represent country constituencies can vouch for that. It is more difficult for farmers to keep their sons on the land to-day. The time is coming when we shall have to do something to assist them, even if we have to subsidise them. It would be a much sounder proposition to subsidise the farmer and help him to keep his men on the land, producing something, than it would be to leave him to drift to the cities which are already overcrowded.

A great deal can be said on the question of petrol rationing. Western Australia uses only 8 per cent. of the total amount of petrol consumed within the Commonwealth, notwithstanding which supplies have been seriously cut, and in many respects we are being harshly treated. All will agree upon the necessity for making every possible sacrifice in our effort to win the war. This State, however, is in a position different from that occupied by the other States. The chairman of the Liquid Fuel Control Board (Mr. Millen) said recently that in Victoria no farmer was further than nine miles from a railway. In Western Australia many farmers are much further removed from a railway than that, and yet we are suffering the same cuts as have been administered in the other States. We are told in the Speech that there are more gas producers in Western Australia than there are in all the other States put together. It does appear that we in this State are playing our part so far as petrol conservation is concerned. The farmers in my district are having a difficult time, although I am aware that their plight is not different from that of farmers in other areas. They are finding it difficult to obtain sufficient petrol supplies to keep their milking plants operating and to get cream and milk to the factories. They are asked to produce more milk for condensing purposes and more cheese. To do so, particularly in view of the labour shortage, they must have petrol to work their machines and transport their produce to the factories, and they are not getting enough for those purposes. It seems to be wrong that the city man, who enjoys many conveniences of transport, is still able to obtain in many

eases all the petrol he requires.

Technical education was mentioned in the Lient.-Governor's Speech. I am glad that this facility is to be extended to country areas. If we are to expand our secondary industries, technical education should go hand in hand with that expansion. Speaking of education generally, now that child endowment has been introduced, the time is opportune to raise the school-leaving age. That has been advocated in this House on numerous occasions, and I hope that this session we will be told that the leaving age is to be raised.

Mr. Needham: Do you think the endowment sufficient for the basic wage earner?

Mr. McLARTY: I thought child endowment was introduced to assist the basic wage earner.

Mr. J. Hegney: Five shillings a week is not much for a boy of 14.

Mr. McLARTY: It will help. The proposal to raise the school-leaving age was brought forward long before child endowment was mentioned.

I hope the Minister for Lands will this session introduce legislation to control potato growing. We who are interested in the industry desire growers to be licensed and registered, as we feel that this would help the industry. The Minister no doubt is aware that the foreign element is entering very largely into the industry. The standard of living of these foreigners is below that of our own producers, and unless something is done to enable our own producers to organise themselves I feel that their task even to earn enough to live on will be exceedingly difficult.

Mr. Thorn: It is not altogether the standard of living; the foreigners get financial assistance more easily than our people do.

The Minister for Mines: Do not make a silly statement like that. It is wrong.

Mr. Thorn: The hon. member should not make silly statements.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The Minister for Mines: Why does not the hon. member speak like a man?

Mr. Thorn: I am as good a man as is the Minister.

The Minister for Mines: Never in his life. Who told the hon. member that story?

Mr. Thorn: The Minister for Mines is always booming himself.



Mr. McLARTY: I now wish to deal with a pernicious matter. Meetings have been held throughout the metropolitan area lately with respect to law enforcement. I have not attended those meetings, but we must deal with starting-price betting from the right aspect. This session the Government ought to introduce legislation providing definitely for a minimum fine for that offence. A minimum fine is fixed for a breach of the Fisheries Act.

Mr. Sampson: And with respect to bread-baking!

Mr. McLARTY: If it is just to fix a minimum fine in certain cases, it is certainly just to do so for the offence of starting-price betting.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Why not legalise it and so control it?

Mr. McLARTY: We read of a man at Fremantle being fined £5 or £10 for this offence, while a man in Perth was fined £75 for it. Such action brings the law into contempt. At this time particularly we cannot afford to allow the law to be brought into contempt, and therefore I suggest to the Government that it introduces legislation to fix a minimum fine so that our magistrates may be consistent and inflict the same punishment for the same crime.

When speaking to the Address-in-reply, the member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Tonkin) expressed the hope that Sir William Eggleston should not be allowed to proceed to China as Australia's representative. I know of no man in Australia better qualified to occupy the position. Sir William is an eminent lawyer.

Mr. Tonkin: That is a remarkable statement in view of what he said.

Mr. McLARTY: He is an eminent lawyer and an ex-Minister of the Crown. He has written some valuable books and is an authority on Pacific affairs.

Mr. Tonkin: But he is going as a diplomat! That is his prime occupation.

Mr. McLARTY: He, being an authority on Pacific affairs, has every qualification for the post. I agree with the hon. member that what Sir William said was indiscreet.

Mr. Tonkin: It was. You are very mild indeed.

Mr. McLARTY: Perhaps when he said it he did not expect that it would be published to the world.

Mr. Raphael: He might have been two sheets in the wind!

Mr. McLARTY: He is not that type of man. I myself thought the Minister for Labour was indiscreet the other day when he, a Minister holding a responsible position, described Sir William as a Fascist.

The Minister for Labour: So he is.

Mr. McLARTY: The Commonwealth Government would not send a Fascist to represent us in the democracy of China.

The Minister for Labour: I say he is a Fascist type.

Mr. McLARTY: There is not much difference in the Minister's statements.

The Deputy Premier: You would not agree with his statement?

Mr. McLARTY: No. I think it was indiscreet of Sir William to make the statement.

The Deputy Premier: It was worse than indiscreet.

Mr. Doney: Yes. It was stupid.

The Deputy Premier: That is so.

Mr. McLARTY: Many people in Australia are to-day condemning certain politicians for their attitude towards the war, and I think with some justification.

The Deputy Premier: I think it was an insult to the Prime Minister.

Mr. McLARTY: I do not think for one moment that Sir William included the Prime Minister.

Mr. Doney: He did not specifically exclude him.

The Minister for Labour: Why apologise for Sir William?

Mr. McLARTY: I am not.

Mr. Raphael: You are making a pretence.

Mr. McLARTY: No. Sir William is well able to take care of himself. I am glad that we are not to have extra taxation imposed on us this session.

Mr. Withers: As far as the hon. member knows!

Mr. McLARTY: I have read the Premier's statement. Of course, things have happened since the Premier left the State. At all events, if no extra taxation is imposed this session, this will be the only session since I have been a member of Parliament when additional taxation has not been imposed on the people. At this time it is right that the Commonwealth Government should have the field of taxation, notwithstanding that more is being taken from the people at present than has ever been taken from them before. The Premier in my opinion has done well at the Loan Council, because we shall receive



sufficient money to keep the State going. If we secure more defence expenditure, as we have been promised, the outlook for our State will be fairly bright so far as concerns employment in the future.

**MR. RODOREDA** (Roebourne) [5.12]: Some three or four years have elapsed since I asked members to listen to me on the Address-in-reply debate. I almost feel like apologising to them now, but there are some matters concerning my electorate that I desire to advertise as much as possible. I therefore take this opportunity to advise the House and the public of them. The Lieut.-Governor's Speech gives no indication at all that the Government intends to bring down legislation to put into effect the recommendations of the Royal Commissioner who was appointed to inquire into the pastoral industry. I hope that is an indication that the Minister for Lands, in his lengthy negotiations with the financial firms concerned, has come to some agreement whereby the desperate position into which the industry has deteriorated will be improved. I cannot emphasise too strongly that the industry is in a most precarious state. Never since its inception have conditions been so bad, and if something is not done shortly the whole structure of the industry will collapse, owing to the burden of interest. Drought conditions have prevailed for the past six or seven years and have so depleted the flocks that the entire production of the stations is now insufficient to meet even the interest bill. Most of the pastoralists are now acting as poorly paid shepherds for the financial firms. Whatever comes or goes, the first charge upon their produce is interest. Something must be done, either by legislation or by co-operation with the financial firms who now own the industry, or the industry will cease to exist.

I have been touring my electorate for two and a half or three months and it is heart-breaking to see the conditions that prevail. Luckily, some winter rains fell—the first normal winter rains for seven or eight years—and these saved the pastoralists from absolute ruin. At present the flocks would average, I suppose, only about 20 per cent. of the normal number. If the drought should continue, as it has in many portions of the pastoral areas, goodness knows what will happen to the industry. I know the Minister for Lands is hopeful that the financial institutions will listen to reason

and not force the Government to introduce legislation to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission. Even if the capital values of the properties are written down to a certain extent, that will not be enough. Either the State Government or the Federal Government will have to make arrangements for loans for restocking purposes. The individual pastoralist cannot possibly make that provision unaided. The interest rates charged for any such loans must be merely nominal. In my electorate many of the station owners have starving stock, yet less than a hundred miles away ample feed is available. In the Port Hedland district the property owners urgently need more sheep, but the financial institutions say, "No, we cannot afford to buy more sheep for you." Therefore the sheep in the Roebourne area must starve while an ample food supply for them exists less than a hundred miles away, and the only consideration that prevents starving sheep from being saved is—finance. How much longer the Government will permit such conditions to obtain, I am at a loss to understand.

A reappraisal of pastoral rents is due next year. I urge the Minister for Lands to send out appraisers to make personal inspections of the properties. The last reappraisal was effected in 1922, and the anomalies created by that reappraisal, caused by inspectors who did not know their business, have constituted a source of annoyance, worry and expense to all the pastoral lessees ever since. I trust that the Minister will appoint appraisal inspectors who know their jobs and will thoroughly investigate the position of properties about which complaints have been made.

The Minister for Lands: That will be a very big job.

**MR. RODOREDA:** It will be a big job, and if not done properly will not be worth doing at all. The Roebourne district possesses another asset that is entirely unexploited, and is quite unknown in most parts of Australia. I refer to huge deposits of blue asbestos. I have it on the authority of one of the most cautious of the Government geologists, that there is, on the most conservative estimate, 100,000,000 tons of blue asbestos available. That asbestos is of the finest quality of any such deposits in the world. Those figures are astronomical, but as I have pointed out, are con-