

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: This matter has been persistently placed before the Commonwealth Government by more than one Minister. The latest information we have, which is very recent, is to the effect that Western Australia is included in the scheme along with all other States and no preference is being shown to other States. Details of the site chosen in Western Australia are expected to reach the Premier by first air mail.

### QUESTION—RAILWAYS.

#### *Members of Forces and Diesel Electric Trains.*

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is it a fact that members of the Forces are prohibited from travelling on Diesel electric trains? 2, If so, does this prohibition extend to those who are prepared to pay ordinary railway fares for the journey? 3, If the answer to question 2 is in the affirmative: (a) what, if any, is the justification for refusing a member of the Forces the same rights as civilians; (b) under what regulation or statute is the prohibition lawful; (c) will he take steps to enable such members of the Forces to travel in such trains?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, Owing to limited accommodation on these cars it is necessary to restrict the number of soldiers travelling thereon on leave passes or at concession rates. 2, No. 3, Answered by No. 2.

### QUESTION—LICENSING ACT.

#### *As to Punishments inflicted.*

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Justice: In view of the Police Court's discrimination between those arrested for excessive drinking by fining those that seldom appear before the Court, and imprisoning the regular offenders, will the Government endeavour to have the law similarly applied to those arrested for illegal starting-price betting and impose imprisonment as a deterrent?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE replied: The measure of punishment imposed by the Courts for any offence is entirely within the discretion of the magistrates and justices and is a matter in which it would be highly improper for the Government to give any direction.

### QUESTION—UNIFORM TAXATION.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM (without notice) asked the Premier: Will the House be given an opportunity to discuss fully the proposed uniform taxation between the Commonwealth and the States before it is finally committed?

The PREMIER replied: I do not mind giving the House an opportunity to discuss this proposal, but I am not sure whether anything that I or the Premier of any other State of Australia may suggest in regard to the matter will be carried out. Members are aware of the proposal submitted by the Committee of the Federal Parliament with regard to uniform taxation. It is intended to hold a Premiers' Conference tomorrow week to deal with the matter. Reading between the lines, however, it seems to me that if the States do not agree to the proposal, uniform taxation will be put into operation irrespective of what the States or a majority of them may agree upon. I opposed the imposition of a uniform taxation at the last conference dealing with the matter. That conference was held some nine or 10 months ago. On present indications, I would prefer to take up the attitude I then adopted—

Mr. Hughes: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: Because from my knowledge of constitutional government, once the purse of a State is threatened, the Government's position becomes untenable.

Mr. Mann: You might dispose of this House altogether if uniform taxation becomes law.

The PREMIER: Generally, proposals of this character are, like the medicinal pill, sugar-coated in the first instance. The proposal of the Committee is sugar-coated to the extent that we are told the States will not be any worse off this year than they would be if they imposed their own taxation.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: On a point of order, I understand that the Premier is replying to a question without notice. He is now making a statement. Will the statement be subject to debate, please?

Mr. SPEAKER: No, not unless there is something important that members may wish to discuss and for which they may be given an opportunity. The Premier's statement is in reply to a question.

The PREMIER: All I desire to do is to indicate that I cannot answer the question submitted by the Leader of the Opposition

merely in the affirmative, because the position is without my jurisdiction instead of being within it.

Mr. Patrick : You think the Federal Government can set aside the Constitution to enable it to do this ?

The PREMIER : The Federal Government does not require to set aside the Constitution seeing that it gives the Federal Government the right to impose taxation. Should the Federal authorities impose taxation to the extent of 18s. in the pound on certain incomes, not much will be left for the State to tax. Even if we were to impose one, it would be absurd, and the tax would be impossible of collection because the money would not be in the possession of the persons affected to enable them to make the required payments. Regarding this matter, Ministers are, on principle, entirely against the proposal for unified taxation. They regard it as a means of bringing about unification without providing any of the benefits that we might otherwise expect to receive.

Hon. W. D. Johnson : On a point of order! I submit that the Premier's continuance is a breach of privilege and distinctly unfair to the House. I suggest that the question be read with a view to determining whether or not the Premier is making a statement that should be the subject of debate. If the statement is submitted in the form of an answer to a question, then there is not much of interest for the House in the matter.

Mr. SPEAKER : If the member for Guildford-Midland will wait a while, I propose to make a statement that I think he will regard as satisfactory.

Hon. W. D. Johnson : That should have been made before the Premier started.

The PREMIER : This is a very important question, and my statement is in answer to the query by the Leader of the Opposition. I do not desire to make a speech on the subject ; in fact, I did not come prepared to make one. The Leader of the Opposition informed me only two or three minutes before the House met that it was his intention to ask the question without notice. To answer such a question without providing reasons would perhaps be very inadvisable at the moment, and I think I have given members sufficient indication to suggest that the issue involved is very important from the point of view of Western Aus-

tralia, in regard to its relationship with the Commonwealth, and such an issue should not be hastily determined.

Unfortunately, perhaps, the powers vested in the Commonwealth are such that we may not have an opportunity to debate the matter prior to some position being foisted on us. It may be that some decision will be arrived at in accordance with the terms of the Financial Agreement, or the decision may be applied under duress, which we shall have to accept. I have said sufficient in reply to the question to indicate that the State Government is not in favour of the proposal on principle. Whether any such decision may be arrived at as a war measure in the interests of Australia as a whole is another matter altogether. I cannot say that the House will have an opportunity to discuss this proposal because a decision may be reached in the matter by the Federal Government, and the State may be forced to accept the position at the forthcoming Premiers' Conference. Naturally, we may discuss the matter afterwards, but this Parliament will have no actual power to affect the decision, which may be arrived at shortly.

#### MOTION—SITTING DAYS AND HOURS.

THE PREMIER (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [11.14] : I move—

That for the remainder of the session the House shall meet for the despatch of business each sitting day at 11 a.m. and shall sit until 1 p.m., if necessary, and, if requisite, from 2.15 p.m. onwards.

The motion is submitted on account of the desire of the House Committee, in view of the war situation, that sittings of the House be not held at night so that black-out or brown-out conditions shall prevail throughout the building as much as possible. It would be unnecessarily expensive to undertake the black-out or brown-out of the premises as a whole in a reasonably effective way. To undertake the task would cost between £700 and £800. Doubtless day meetings of Parliament will inconvenience some members. As I indicated during my Ministerial statement, it is anticipated that the session will not last for a lengthy period, and, in the circumstances, I think we may as well meet during the daytime and thus do away with the necessity for fairly expensive alterations required for black-out