

high as 50. Experienced teachers contend that if the best results are to be obtained the maximum number in a class should not exceed 30. I did not see in the McNair report any reference to the size of classes, but I understand that in other parts of the world the classes are much less than 50. They are somewhere about 25 or 30. After giving serious thought to this matter I have come to the conclusion that when a class exceeds more than 30 pupils, it puts a severe strain on the teacher. These are two phases of our educational system which are worthy of notice and which, I daresay, will receive the sympathetic consideration of the Government. There is also the question of raising the school age. During the last session we passed a measure agreeing to raise the leaving age to 15.

I know that certain reforms which all mean increased expenditure in our educational system are appreciated by the Government. For instance, if we put into operation the law allowing the increased leaving age, it would in itself, cost a lot of money simply to provide further accommodation. But the State should not have to bear the whole of that expenditure. I understand that negotiations with the Commonwealth suggest it should assist financially and that there is much need for reform. I think the Commonwealth should assist. Again, we would experience difficulty in connection with manpower and with the necessary materials in the early post-war years. But it is imperative that these matters should receive a very high priority so that men, money and materials will be available for their implementation. The immediate requirements of our educational system might be summed up in this way: More and better equipped schools; more teachers and a minimum training course of three years; classes not to exceed 30 scholars; and the extension of the excellent system of university grants to students introduced by the Commonwealth.

One other matter to which I wish to refer before resuming my seat, and which was mentioned in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech, is the unification of railway gauges. We are informed by the Speech that information is being obtained in regard to the unification of railway gauges. We have been hearing of the unification of railway gauges for 40 years. There was never a session of the Commonwealth Parliament when I was a member that the question did not arise. We

had untold information about it. We had reports ad lib. from highly qualified engineers, not only in regard to the necessity for a uniform railway gauge but also as to the size of the gauge. If ever a doubt existed in our minds as to the necessity for this, then the present war has disposed of it. This is one of the public works crying out for implementation, and I sincerely hope that very early in the post-war period it will be taken in hand and that we, in Australia, will be able to travel from Wiluna to the northern parts of Queensland without the difficulties arising because of breaks of gauge. That is all I have to say on the Address-in-reply. I express the hope that before long the war in which we are engaged will have come to a victorious close.

MR. OWEN (Swan): As a newly elected member it was with some trepidation that I looked forward to the occasion of my first speech in this House. However, having met the members and listened to their deliberations over the past week or so I find that they, and even the Ministers, are only human after all. I wish to record my appreciation of the kindly advice and encouragement that has been given me from all quarters of this House. I was pleased to be associated with this Chamber in conveying to the relatives of the late Mr. R. S. Sampson our sympathy. You, Mr. Speaker, knew Mr. Sampson as a member of this Assembly. I knew him as our representative for Swan. Because of his ability to know all that was going on, and to keep in touch with even the minor details of his electorate he was welcome in every section of the district. I feel sure that he has set a very high standard for me to follow. It remains for me to prove whether I can be as good as he was.

The news from the war fronts is very encouraging. After five years of war the United Nations have at last got the enemy on the run. Although victory may not be in sight, it does appear to be just around the corner and we can look forward with confidence to the outcome of the war. When victory is achieved and the boys and girls of the Services return home, we must see that the lessons of the war are not forgotten. One outstanding matter is that in order to make our continent safe we must develop it more thoroughly. To make it secure from aggression we must have more population.

I think there is a lot in the old saying, "Populate or perish." In view of this I suggest that we adopt the slogan of "Progress and populate." If we adopt a progressive policy and our industries are progressive we need not worry about inducing migrants to our shores; they will come of their own accord, and once the flow starts it is likely to increase because nothing succeeds like success, and industry builds on industry.

A classic example of this is to be found in the rapid expansion of our goldmining industry some 40 years ago. In the hope of making money, people flocked here from all parts of the world, and in consequence our other industries benefited from the expansion of the goldmining industry. Agriculture, particularly fruitgrowing, received quite an impetus as a result of this expansion. It also made possible that great feat of engineering, the goldfields water supply, which, in its turn, has done much to stabilise the water supply of our eastern wheat belt, and made it possible to carry a larger number of stock than could otherwise have been done. Because of these successes we should have confidence in the future and, by adopting a bold policy of expansion, we can develop our State far beyond what it is at present. Whatever the outcome of the Referendum on the 19th of this month, it must be expected that the Commonwealth Government, because it holds all chief avenues of taxation, must assist in financing any sound scheme of rehabilitation, or industrial expansion.

In this State, as a direct consequence of the war, many industries have languished. We have a lot of leeway to make up. As a result, the manufacturing, mining, building and timber industries will have a big call on our manpower after the war. If we are to achieve a balanced economy it is only right that these industries should be developed to their fullest possible extent but, because the source of real wealth is in the land and because we have so much land suitable for development, the agricultural industries must receive attention. Throughout Western Australia we have large areas of developed and partially developed land, and also much undeveloped land. I feel sure that the Minister for Lands has already in mind the direction that any land settlement scheme should take. But because I know the possibilities, or per-

haps I should say the capabilities, of making a good living from a comparatively small area of land I would commend to his consideration the suggestion that some of the well-watered and fertile gullies which traverse many of our forest lands should be opened for land settlement.

There seems to be an accepted theory here that land settlement and forest reserves are poles apart. That is somewhat similar to the feeling in America in its wild west day when the open range ranchers were perturbed at the inroads of the so-called nester or sod-busters. I cannot see why, under proper direction, these things should not go hand-in-hand. Many of these well-watered gullies, when developed, make ideal orchard and garden lands. They are usually timbered with blackbutt and red gum in association with swamp banksia, paper bark and ti-tree scrub, and grow very little, if any, good jarrah. Their alienation would not in any way reduce the effective areas of forest land. If those areas were settled and developed they would provide ready-made firebreaks and the roads leading to and from the settlements would also make firebreaks. The settlers would be in a position to afford valuable assistance in quelling forest fires, and would also provide a reservoir of labour for part-time and seasonal forestry work. I venture to say that in this way and within a range of 50 or 60 miles of Perth, hundreds of settlers could be established to the mutual benefit of all concerned.

Before any new large-scale land settlement is launched we should at least make sure of our present settlers and see that they are put on a sound and secure footing. So, in order to safeguard our present and future settlement, an intensive programme of agricultural research should be undertaken. The practical experience gathered during the lifetime of the State coupled with the capabilities of modern research, should do much to ensure that no future land settlement is doomed to failure. Other phases of industry and the marketing and distribution of our products should also be greatly developed by modern research. We should endeavour to get the utmost out of all our industries.

The member for Claremont, speaking of soil fertility yesterday, questioned whether superphosphate was not taking everything out of the soil and giving nothing back. I

agree that superphosphate, used indiscriminately and without recourse to proper farming methods, does tend to have that effect, but with proper methods it can and does actually build up the fertility of the soil. Progressive farmers, particularly in orchards, adopt the practice of green manuring. A green manure crop may consist of lupins, tick beans or peas planted and grown with the intention of ploughing it in. When the green manure crop decomposes it returns to the soil all the minerals taken from it plus a large quantity of humus, together with the nitrogen it has extracted from the air. The green manure, when rotted down is quite equal to stable manure. In fact, the excreta of animals does not add to the soil all of the mineral value of the foodstuff consumed, because the animal makes use of certain minerals and proteins and therefore these constituents are not returned to the soil in the form of manure. In the drier areas it would be impossible to grow large quantities of green manure crops, but by a system of crop rotation it is possible to build up the fertility of the soil. In former days the practice was wheat crop, burn stubble and re-crop annually. The fertility and soil structure were destroyed and that in turn permitted of soil erosion. But this is not the general practice today.

Mr. North: Then I gather that farmers are improving the soil?

Mr. OWEN: Yes, by adopting proper farming methods they are definitely improving the soil.

Another matter of paramount importance to the producer and the consumer is that of price-fixing. Certain primary products, including some lines of fruit and vegetables, have had a ceiling price imposed. It seems that the price-fixing regulations were designed to help the consumer and prevent unduly high prices from operating. The aim seemingly is not to prevent profiteering on the part of the grower. In my opinion the grower does not get all he deserves, and the fixing of ceiling prices without relation to grade standards is definitely wrong and likely to get us nowhere. Taking the periods of plentiful supplies, the ceiling prices have never been reached, and the wholesale returns to growers are often low indeed. In these cases it is not always the consumer that benefits. A distributor who sees the opportunity—it is hard to keep a check on each individual—

is often free to charge the maximum price without any relation to the maximum profit allowed to him. On the other hand, when commodities are in short supply it frequently happens that all grades bring the maximum price. We have had considerable experience of this in the last 12 months since ceiling prices have been in operation. I, and many other growers, have had the experience of sending first, second and third-grade produce to the markets and receiving the maximum price for all grades. If the first-grade commodity is worth the maximum—for example, in the case of cauliflowers, 17s. 6d. per dozen or a retail price of 2s. each—

The Premier: Irrespective of size.

Mr. OWEN: —irrespective of size or quality—then the consumer of the second or third-grade product is being robbed to the extent of 6d. or 9d. per cauliflower because of the inferior quality of the line. On the other hand, if the third-grade line is worth the ceiling price, then the superior grade is worth considerably more, and the grower is not getting a proper return for his labour.

Mr. Leslie: That does not encourage efficient farming.

Mr. OWEN: No; on the contrary, it is tantamount to paying a premium to the grower of the inferior product. I earnestly hope that if the ceiling prices are to be continued steps will be taken to implement grading regulations so that ceiling prices, instead of covering all produce irrespective of grade, may be fixed in accordance with first, second and third or inferior grades. If this were done, both the grower and the consumer would be much better served.

Other speakers more able than I have discussed the needs of modern transport, and have pointed out the shortcomings of the railways, tramways, trolley-buses and other forms of transport. Whilst I admit that the difficulty has been accentuated by the war, there is no denying the fact that improvements are long overdue. If I may mention one phase without trespassing upon the preserves of other members, I would like to refer, for the attention of the Minister for Railways, to the matter of the carriage of perambulators on the Perth tramcars. We would all like to see a large increase in the population of the State, and no doubt the baby bonus and child endowment allowances will encourage larger families, but with the

shortage of domestic help and the fact that tradesmen cannot and often will not deliver household goods to the consumer, people have to go to the shops for them, and the mother of a child that has to be wheeled in a pram is to be pitied when she has to travel by tram.

Time and again I have seen women with prams left standing at the stopping places because the tram crew could not or would not accept the prams. I do not know whether it is a matter of tramway regulations or whether it is merely an unwritten law amongst the tramway men themselves that only two prams may be carried on a tram at the one time, but it is a fact that many tramway men refuse to take more, and many women have complained of it. If it is only a matter of space—admittedly some of the large prams occupy considerable space—I would suggest that hooks such as are provided on privately-owned buses and on the trolley-buses be fitted on the front and rear of tramcars so that if the crew of the car could not or would not lift the pram aboard, the mother herself could put it on the hook and be sure that it was accompanying her to her destination.

Reference was also made by the member for Claremont to the beautifying of the city and its surroundings, presumably in order that we and tourists might enjoy the scenery. We have in this State, and not always at a great distance from the city, beautiful natural scenery, and if we had good means of transport to reach there and return in quick time, we could exploit these beauty spots for the tourist traffic that would come our way. In pre-war days it was usual for mail boats to call each week, one inwards and one outwards; they arrived early in the morning and departed at night. Passengers, with the idea of seeing something of our city, usually made their way only to Perth, because there were no transport facilities to go further, and they had to stay around the city. If means were provided to get out during the day a distance of from 30 to 50 miles—there is no reason why that should not be provided—they would see something of our country and serve as ambassadors in advertising the beauties of the State. By that means not only would the tourist traffic be enhanced but new settlers would be induced to come here permanently. With these remarks and in

the hope that the war will soon be ended and that we can assume a little more responsibility in our peacetime progress, I support the motion.

MR. TELFER (Avon): As a new member I wish to express my appreciation of the many courtesies shown to me by members of the House. I am also extremely thankful for the help that Ministers have given me from time to time. I feel it my duty to assist in bringing about a better post-war readjustment. I was very glad to have heard the expression that security is one of our dominating desires. Security from fear, security from want and security to see that our children receive good education are certainly amongst the dominating factors for us to exploit. The expression has also been used that it is desirable to see that our State is more densely populated and that people in the country get more out of life. I look at things in this way. If we can provide decent amenities for the country, people will go there. In the past the country has had only 10 per cent. of amenities and 90 per cent. of lip-service. I regret very much that those in power in the Commonwealth over the last 15 years have allowed a shocking state of affairs to develop.

If the countryside were given a decent standard of living, proper housing, good educational facilities, water, transport and amenities in the towns, I feel that three-parts of our objective to populate the countryside would be achieved. We have to accept it that all things have a foundation. I am of opinion that our economic life mainly depends upon the man on the land. If he does well, naturally the industrialist does well, as does also the business man and the professional man. If we place the man on the land on a sound footing we all go forward. We must recognise, and the community must recognise that no one section can go forward while another is going backward for any considerable period of time. There should be more team work to allow all sections of the community to go forward, for then we would not have so many heartburnings as have been experienced. Our heritage should give us a reasonable standard. That must be one of the dominating factors in the days to come. Scientists in the past have on many occasions worked for the benefit of the individual. The work of