

The community is not facing up to its responsibility in the matter. It is not only these individuals—unfortunate though they are—who are affected. It is a matter of the utmost importance to the whole social structure of Australia. I was so interested in the case of an unfortunate person who is serving a second term of imprisonment for such an offence, and so concerned about the whole set-up, that I wrote to several States in America, where I had read that the authorities were leading the way in reform in such matters. The Attorney General has, through me, copies of enactments in various States of America. While I appreciate that many of the aspects incorporated in those enactments would not necessarily be applicable or suitable to Western Australia, the genesis of the correct ideas may be found in them. I hope that in such matters the Government will broaden its outlook and take into account this alarming increase in sexual offences.

I will deal with various items that interest me under the different headings on the Estimates. I hope my remarks tonight will be taken by all members as being uttered with sincerity and a full sense of my responsibility to this House, to my electorate and the community. I hope we will see co-operation between the Opposition and the Government, without which there can be no progress either in this House or in the country. So long as the Government serves the best interests of the State and does not yield to pressure from individuals or groups in relation to its legislative proposals, I will support it. If, however, there is any possibility of a departure from that very wise attitude, then I shall be required, with my colleague, the member for Victoria Park, to consider just what attitude to adopt. In conclusion, I trust that the deliberations of this Parliament will take the State a little further along the road towards the very necessary progress, which should be part of the future of Western Australia.

MR. CORNELL (Avon) [9.51]: To the congratulations of previous speakers I should like to add my own. I feel sure that Mr. Speaker will carry out his high office with the same strict impartiality that has characterised the holders of his honourable position down through the years. I would also congratulate you, Mr. Deputy

Speaker, upon being appointed to the Chairmanship of Committees, and I trust your term of office will be equally successful. In passing, I desire to make reference to my predecessor in this House, Mr. Telfer, and to pay a tribute to what he did in the interests of the Avon electorate. Although he was in that position for a very short time—that may be the fate awaiting me as well—I want it to be recorded that he did a very good job in the interests of the constituency he represented, and for his efforts in that respect I award him full marks.

The Government of the day also did quite a good job in the Avon district. Whether that was because it is a borderline seat I do not know, but evidently while the work of that Government was appreciated by the electors there, it was not so appreciated that they did not desire some change and, in fact, there was an alteration in my favour. Having been associated with politics in a small way for many years through my father's membership of another place, I possess a full realisation and appreciation of the uncertainty of the political game. I know that the tide that washed me into my present seat in this House, might easily wash me out of it in the future. However, while I am here, I shall endeavour to do my best to carry on the traditions that my father observed in another place, and if I can do one-tenth as much good as he did, I shall have a clear conscience.

I notice from a perusal of the Lieut.-Governor's Speech that the Government contemplates an amendment of the Rural Relief Fund Act. In this regard I must express some concern. My regret is that apparently the intention of the Government does not go quite far enough, although it is a step in the right direction. The Act is rather lopsided. It has forced unsecured creditors, such as small storekeepers, to accept compositions in respect of their debts but it has not done much to recondition the debts of secured creditors. It did serve a useful purpose in the direction of rehabilitating farmers at a time when they needed help most. Although the contemplated amendment does not go as far as many of us would like, it may be that the Commonwealth Government will be induced to reverse its past decision and give the necessary consent, which would enable the Government to extinguish entirely debts in re-

spect of dues under the Rural Relief Fund Act.

In common with the member for Maylands, I am a little disappointed in connection with the Government's proposition to sewer towns where there are over 600 dwellings. Such a proposal will not mean a great deal to the country areas as not many have that number of homes. I suggest to the Government that the decision in that respect be reconsidered so that the archaic system that obtains in many rural centres can be abolished, with benefit to the health of the community. I also commend the Government on its proposal to consolidate the many Acts that exist in connection with the functions of local governing authorities.

I trust that the proposed legislation contemplates the striking of one rate only, which would be an over-all rate, thus doing away with the necessity that exists at present of striking three rates—general, health and vermin—each of which has to be determined separately. I suggest that a local authority rate be struck as the sole one to be levied, apart, of course, from loan rates. I would like some reform provided in connection with the present audit system with regard to local authorities. The reform should take the shape, for instance, of doing away with pinpricks that irritate at present due to the fact that the secretary is not treated as the chief executive officer, but in ninety-nine out of a hundred cases as a potential speculator.

Reference was made by the member for Perth to the shocking condition of the electoral rolls, and in that respect I can concur in his remarks. His experience was that many names that should have been included on the rolls were not there. I experienced that to some extent, but, on the other hand, I found on the Avon roll the names of some hundreds of people which should not have been included. The people concerned had left the district or had died, and during the election campaign the number of circulars that were returned through the Dead Letter Office was really surprising. His suggestion with regard to co-terminus electoral boundaries was commendable. I take it that in the country districts he presupposes further subdivisions but in that regard the Commonwealth authorities might not be prepared to agree. However, certain amendments of the Electoral Act are overdue, particularly one that would prevent

what is apparently possible now, namely, a dead man being permitted to exercise the franchise. When he spoke the other evening, the member for Beverley delivered what was a veritable dirge of despondency.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Hear, hear!

Mr. CORNELL: He was very pessimistic about the future of the parliamentary institution. Although I am a newcomer to this House, I feel I cannot concur in what the hon. member said. I am afraid he was in a particularly morbid mood that evening and his remarks to new members were, to say the least of it, not very encouraging. I do agree that many people are cynical regarding the parliamentary system and to a large degree that cynicism is due to the fact that they consider that parliamentarians do not work. I can give that assertion the lie direct. In support of that contention, some people urge that for seven months of the year or thereabouts, Parliament does not sit. I have heard it said that we should not sit at all for the full 12 months, but obviously I cannot agree with that suggestion. On the other hand, I submit that if there were two sessions each year, the public would appreciate the fact that members of Parliament were endeavouring to carry out their duties. Furthermore, such a system would tend to prevent the rather mad rush that usually characterises the close of the session, and which is not always conducive to the passing of good legislation. I would strongly support any proposal for holding two sittings of Parliament each year.

There has been talk of political jobbery, but this has been practised by both parties and, I regret to say, seems to have become part and parcel of our political life. People seem to accept it philosophically, and when there is a change of Government there is, to a large extent, a change in certain jobs. Membership of the Licensing Bench has long been regarded as a political plum. In fact it appears to have been created for that specific purpose. After pulling in the party cart for some years the hacks are then turned out into this well pastured political paddock—the Licensing Court. This also applies to other State jobs. This obtains also in other spheres, although in this State the financial consideration is small and it does not assume the proportions experienced in the Federal arena.

Much has been said about the various boards and controls with which we have to

put up in these days. The chief complaint seems to be that boards and controls have multiplied so greatly during the last decade. In my opinion, some of the existing boards are entirely unnecessary, though some serve a useful purpose. Those that are mere excrescences could well be abolished without any great disadvantage to the community. It has been said, and I agree, that had there been boards in Noah's time the Ark would never have been built.

The subject of housing has been plastered a good deal and will continue to be so. The Government is not to blame for the present deplorable position, but it will incur blame if steps are not taken to remedy existing troubles. The housing problem is approaching the stage of bordering on a national emergency and civil servants do not seem to be able to cope with the situation. A suggestion has been made that a committee from inside Parliament would do better. This suggestion contains some merit and I think could be implemented with results advantageous to the many home-seekers who are now viewing the future with a good deal of concern.

We have had frequent pessimistic expressions about the future by leading public men. A prominent South African said that it seemed as if people were grumbling because there was not enough gloom to go round. From the Prime Minister down, we have had pessimistic utterances which, I consider, are unwarranted. Provided, as the Leader of the Opposition stated the other night, in a thoughtful speech, the will of the people to work is not undermined, posterity has nothing to fear. This is my first speech in the House, and to say that I feel nervous would be an understatement. Western Australia is a young State and a plastic State, and I urge the Government to mould it along sound lines. Members on the Opposition side of the House do not seem to be a bad lot of fellows, and I believe the future of the State will be safe in the hands of the present Government.

I thank members for the attentive hearing they have given me. I do not know whether I shall speak very often, but when I do, I hope it will be on a subject of which I have some knowledge. I thank members for their forbearance and appreciate what they have done for me, both inside and outside the Chamber, since I became a member. Much has been said about election technique. All

I can say that this is inevitable at election time. On such an occasion, one's tongue is apt to outrun one's better judgment, and possibly things are said that are not meant. As often happens, the good goes to the bottom and the rottenness rises to the top. In my electorate I endeavoured to make the fight a clean one, and I must acknowledge that my opponent did the same thing.

On motion by Mr. Styants, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.6 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Thursday 21st August, 1947.

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

QUESTIONS.

STIRLING HIGHWAY BUS ROUTE.

As to Easing Picking-up Regulation.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT (on notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

Will the Government give consideration to allowing privately owned buses, now licensed to operate along Stirling Highway, to pick up and set down passengers at selected points on the trolley bus route?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes, the matter is under consideration.

ROAD BOARDS.

As to Proposed Roadmaking-Machinery Pool.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE (for Hon. A. L. Loton) (on notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

Following on the statement in this morning's issue of "The West Australian" by the Minister for Works regarding the pro-