

present we have a citizen force of nearly 300,000 men under arms. In proportion to population we are a greater military people than any other on earth. We are worse than was Germany. Let us do what the other side have continually asked us to do—let us develop this great country. I want to say, further, that we require to be very careful. There is a solemn duty on the member for Perth (Hon. J. D. Connolly). I trust that he and other members will think well before getting on a platform and advocating conscription in the knowledge that they themselves are not bound to go to the Front. How can they ask other men to be conscripted, when there is no compulsion upon themselves, and when they know that, after all, it is unnecessary. This much-talked of wastage in the war is grossly over-stated. The idea that all our comrades at the Front are going to be shot down is a mere subterfuge. Seven thousand men have gone from Australia since these conscription proposals were first made. The difference between young men and old men is vast. Let me conclude with a couple of verses on the subject:—

The young man lay in the trenches in the mud
and the blinding rain,
Death in the earth, and death in the air, and
hunger and cold and pain.
Blood on his hands and blood on his soul from
murder that could not cease,
And the young man said while the guns hashed
red,
“Peace; God give us peace.”

The old man sat in the smokeroom, withered and
lank and lean,
Far from the hell of the bursting shell and the
sea and the ships between.
Safe his old worthless carcase, safe his old
worthless life,
And the old man said, while the young man bled,
“War! war to the knife!”

Mr. HICKMOTT (Pingelly) [4.15 a.m.]: During the debate I have felt pain at some of the opinions expressed in respect to financing this great campaign. It does not matter where a collection may be taken up, we find people all over the State responding magnificently. I do not think there is any reason for us to fear that the people will be backward in giving. Of course, the scheme has not yet been properly formulated, but when we have such

a scheme for the raising of funds for the dependants of those who have fallen on the battlefield, I think it will be found that Australia is responding nobly. We are all brothers after all, and the great bulk of us in the House are Australians. Surely we are not going to see our Australian kinsmen come back to penury after offering their lives in our defence. Surely we have no reason to think that Australia will shirk her duty in this regard.

Mr. Munsie: What is the condition of the men returned up to date?

Mr. HICKMOTT: I have said that we have not yet formulated a proper scheme. No doubt such a scheme will be formulated, and under it every man and woman in Australia will pay according to ability.

Mr. Munsie: Let us have it before the State compels them to sacrifice their lives.

Mr. HICKMOTT: Practically all of us have relatives at the Front, and we feel deeply the obligation we owe to them for the work they have done. Their names are enrolled on the scroll of fame and will live in history after we have gone. I wish to refer to the question of our primary industries, and the condition of our farmers to-day. Members of the Country party have been termed selfish, and it has been said that we are here for nothing but agriculture. Well, what is our selfishness going to do if the general primary industries are successful in consequence of it? Will not everybody else reap the benefit? We have always been out to do the best we could for all classes of the community, and for the general progress and welfare of the State.

Mr. Bolton: We will test you on the Redistribution of Seats Bill.

Mr. HICKMOTT: A good deal of noise has been made by our friends opposite in regard to the assistance given by the Industries Assistance Board to the primary producers. When the Labour Government assumed office they said they would raise the minimum wage from 8s. to 9s. a day. Did they not benefit their own people by so doing? There was no song made about that over here. We think the working man was justified in getting that extra shilling a day and are of opinion that he should get a fair day's wage for a fair day's work. I

have never endeavoured to cut down any man's wages, but it has always been my wish to give a man a shilling or so more than he was engaged for if he was worth it. While I am here I will endeavour to see that the working classes get a fair deal for a fair day's work. I do not see why such a great uproar should be made, therefore, because a few hundred thousand pounds have been distributed amongst the producers of the State, because, after all, if the producer is successful it affects the whole of the community. Some people seem to imagine that what happens in this State is different from what has happened in the pioneering of other countries, but in fact it is the same thing over again. In the Eastern States in the early days the same difficulties were met with as have been met with here, and a great many people who took up land then have gone to the wall. In Gippsland there is land similar in character to the land we have here in the Denmark and southern districts. Scores of men have spent the best part of their lives in Gippsland, and after spending all their money have had to walk out penniless, because they could not conquer the wilderness. It is the men who have followed who have benefited. The same thing applies to the dry areas in Australia. In the mallee country 26 years ago we had visits from advisory boards and members of Parliament who were looking at the country before the Government would give railways and water supply, and these people went back to Parliament and said that the country was not worth saving. The question was asked in Parliament as to what good it was spending money there. Notwithstanding this, those who stuck to the district have come out of it well. The member for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) spoke about the scientific side of farming, and suggested that we should have the soils analysed and examined in order that we might be told what to do with it. The only thing that will help us in this matter is practical experience. We know what artificial manures have done, but if we do not get rain it does not matter what else we do. In this part of the world when we get a season which suits the dry areas, we find that the southern portion of the State suffers from too much rain. In farming the dry areas,

people need to have a sufficient area of land cleared so that they can put more or less the whole of their country under the plough. In going through the eastern districts it is very noticeable that the soil which has been properly treated carries a much better crop than the soil which has not been fallowed. When the rainfall is irregular it is no good scratching in a crop. The land has to be properly cleared and worked in order to keep the moisture in it. Many of our farmers have not sufficient land cleared to enable them to fallow all that they put in under crop, and that is one of the greatest drawbacks in the early pioneering stages. Another trouble is that the farmers are apt to depend too much on their wheat alone, and very few of them keep either a pig or any other animal which will help them to keep the pot boiling. Our farmers ought to keep enough stock in order that they may have their own meat, butter, poultry, and so on. I do not intend to say much about the Esperance business. Members appear to know very little about the mallee country. The member for Kanowna (Mr. Walker) appears to be one of those. I would inform him that we do not take the mallee up by the roots. We roll it down and burn it off. When we first went into the mallee country we sowed the seed on the ground and ploughed it in and harrowed it over. Sometimes the seed was only scratched in with the harrow. Mallee ground is generally easily worked on the top. Many were successful in the first year under these methods, and good crops were obtained, and people were induced because of this success to pursue these methods. It is, however, no good tickling the land and scratching in crops, for when a dry spell comes along, there is no chance of making a success. Farmers should be impressed with the necessity for working up their soils to the utmost extent. I have had a considerable experience of mallee country, although I know very little of the country round Esperance.

Mr. O'Loughlen: You ought to be on this Commission with your knowledge of the mallee.

Mr. HICKMOTT: An official of the Public Works Department told me that he was so much enamoured of the country about Esperance that his intention was to take up

land there. I do not think there is enough salt down there to interfere with wheat growing. In Victoria there are many salt lakes, but the country round about is generally excellent wheat growing country when the season is good. There is not sufficient salt in the soil to interfere with the crops. Near Lake Tyrell, for instance, Mr. Lascelles has a very fine property. Near Swan Hill there are salt refining works, which are commercially profitable, but right up to the edge of the salt lake there crops grow splendidly. In this State, after the timber is cleared, even down along the Great Southern, there are patches of salt which break out. I have seen quite a number of such places. Nothing will grow where the salt breaks out. I have seen nothing like this in the Eastern States. I was rather surprised when I heard that the Government had stopped the Esperance railway. It seems rather a strange proceeding after the Bill had been passed by both Houses of Parliament. It would have been much better, and would not have caused so much comment, if they had finished the building of the railway so far as their supply of rails would allow. I trust the line will not be held up for very long. If it is a fact that the country is not suitable for wheat growing and there is no chance of the people making a success out of it, it is no good the Government spending a large sum of money there because the people would only have to leave it, and the line would be useless after all. I hope the Commission will prove a success, and that not too long a time will elapse before the report is made and the question settled. There are a few matters in connection with my electorate with which I wish to deal. We build railways and roads which cost a lot of money in many districts, but in some cases we have not the ordinary facilities by which the farmer can get his produce to market. At Dwarda, that old settled district around Wandering, there are very few facilities for getting the stock to market. The secretary of the roads board asked me to interview the Commissioner for Railways some little time ago, and get trucking yards built there, but the Commissioner said he could not see his way clear to grant that concession at the present time. Mr. Walts wrote to me recently saying that he had sheep, cattle, and horses to truck, and that the department sent along little waggons and a small chute, so that there was no chance of getting stock into the trucks. I suppose the cost of a little yard, such as is to be seen along the Great Southern railway, would not be more than about £50. For an old-established district with much stock, the Government might grant the necessary facilities.

The Minister for Works: Along the Great Southern railway the settlers pay half the cost.

Mr. HICKMOTT: These people have offered to put up the yard if the Government will furnish the material. Another little matter which has come under my notice recently is the position of settlers not under the Industries Assistance Board. Settlers under the board who are in a bad way, are protected by the moratorium from proceedings in respect of their liabilities. But settlers not under the board, who are in difficulties, do not enjoy this protection; and they have brought their cases to my attention. I should like to know whether there is any way in which these people can be protected during the coming season. If their crops are a failure, they will be practically ruined. They cannot meet their liabilities; their bills will fall due, and they will have no hope of meeting those bills if their crops turn out a failure. I trust the Minister will give this matter consideration. Some of these people tell me they were promised a railway by the present Minister for Railways when Minister for Lands. They were to have that railway within two years, or even 18 months. Some of them have been on their holdings for six or seven years, and the railway has not come yet. They appear to be optimistic enough as to their position, and still think they will be able to make good if they get a railway, so as to be able to send their produce to market. These settlers should be protected, if possible, so that they will not have their machinery and horses taken from them and be compelled to walk off their land penniless. I should like to bring another matter before the House, but I do not know whether it is worth while as Ministers seem to be busy talking. I had intended to suggest that the Roads Board Act required amendment. When passed in the early days,

the measure was probably all right; but now it leads to friction. For instance, a man at Pingelly bought a freehold property, which has been cultivated. A road contractor cut that man's fence, entered his paddock, and dug a hole there for the purpose of obtaining gravel. I think it would be much better if gravel reserves for road making purposes were created, so that the paddocks of settlers would be secure from being entered upon and cut up as occurs under present conditions. There are other cases similar to the one I have mentioned. I suppose that under the existing Act road contractors have a perfect right to enter private land. In the early days of settlement land was not fenced, and therefore that procedure may then have been all right; but it does not work well now-a-days. The Act seems to give no exact definition of what is cultivable land. In the Pingelly case the man had his land cleared and cultivated, and there was stubble on the land. Yet, under the Act, the roads board, apparently, may enter on such land because it does not carry a growing crop. A proper definition is needed. The same thing applies in regard to operations by the Public Works Department. A case was brought under my notice of a man having had land resumed, about four years ago, on the new line between Brookton and Kunjinn. Some 50 acres were resumed out of this holding for railway purposes. He has been writing to the department for some considerable time trying to get the matter settled. As regards some 40 acres the business has been adjusted, but 10 acres still remain in dispute. An officer of the Public Works Department tells me that it is likely to take five or six months before a final settlement will be reached. The law might be amended so that matters of this kind will be expedited. The man here concerned is urging a settlement so that he may know what rent he has to pay.

The Minister for Works: If you will send particulars of the case to my office I will do what I can for you.

Mr. HICKMOTT: I have looked through the report of the Advisory Board on the Dwarda railway extension, and I see that it speaks very favourably of the proposed extension of 15 miles from Dwarda. I have spoken on this subject to the Premier and

the Minister for Works. The Advisory Board favour an extension to Big Brook. My colleague, the member for Williams-Narogin tells me that he does not wish to have the matter hung up. I do not suppose there is any immediate prospect of the line being started, but the people east of the Hotham River will be left out in the cold for all time if that railway is not extended up the Hotham Valley. An extension of seven or eight miles will bring them within reasonable distance of railway communication. At present they are distant 15 or 16 miles from a railway, and the country is hilly. The Advisory Board, I observe, report favourably on a spur line of 25 miles from Brookton, later to be extended to the 42-mile peg on the Perth-Albany road, so connecting with the proposed line from Dwarda to Narrogin and eventually making a trunk line through to Armadale. This would shorten the distance from Narrogin to Fremantle by some 40 miles. I do not wish to do anyone any injustice, but I am informed that there is no settlement on the west side of the Hotham Valley, and, according to the Advisory Board, the line will open up good wandoo and jarrah country. While funds are being scraped together for the construction of the line, inquiry could be made. I want the line placed where it will serve the greatest number of people to the best advantage. It is useless to lay down a railway only to hear complaints about the location. As regards the great war, I am glad to note in the Governor's Speech a consoling tone, and a reference to the turning point in the great struggle. I believe that we and our allies are on the road to success, and I trust that it will not be very long before peace is declared and our noble soldiers are with us again.

Amendment put and passed.

Question as amended put and passed; the Address adopted.

MESSAGE—LICENSING ACT AMENDMENT ACT, TO CONTINUE.

Message received from the Legislative Council that a similar resolution to that set out in the Assembly's Message had been passed by the Council.

House adjourned at 5.2 a.m. (Friday).