

down this pernicious practice. In connection with hours of trading I had a telephone message—and I daresay Mr. Baxter did also—from a man who lives at Mundaring and who pointed out that the present closing time is not very satisfactory to the customers of his hotel. Some of them work in the bush and have a fair way to travel and others work in town and by the time they have made their train journey they are too late to get any refreshment. An amendment of the hours of trading on the lines suggested by Sir Hal Colebatch would be preferable to the hours suggested in the motion.

On motion by Hon. V. Hamersley, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 4.50 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 16th April, 1942.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 11 a.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS (2)—CHARCOAL.

As to Supplies.

Mr. STUBBS asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Is it a fact that charcoal in large quantities will be required in the near future? 2, If so, is he aware that many farmers in the State will gladly produce same provided that the bags are made available and a fair price paid for the charcoal?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, Yes. 2, Bags are available from charcoal merchants. The price for charcoal to the pro-

ducers was recently increased from £5 10s. to £6 per ton, including cost of bags. Farmers willing to produce charcoal are invited to communicate with the Department of Emergency Road Transport, Public Works Department, Perth.

As to Employees' Pay.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Is there any award or registered agreement in existence for employees in the charcoal production trade? 2, If so, what are the rates for axemen, burners, other workers? 3, Has he ever been approached to have a wage fixed for this industry? 4, If so, by whom has the approach been made?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, No. 2, Answered by No. 1. 3, Yes. 4, The Australian Workers' Union. It is understood the union has experienced difficulty in organising the industry because of its rather scattered and isolated nature but the union recently filed an application for an agreement in the Court of Arbitration.

QUESTION—TRANSPORT.

As to Northam Camp Fares.

Mr. STYANTS asked the Minister for Works: 1, Does the Transport Board fix the fares charged by bus and taxi proprietors between Northam and the military camp, also between that campsite and Perth? 2, If so, what are the fares (a) for buses between Northam and the camp (single fare), (b) is permission given to charge an extra penny between No. 1 and No. 4 gates, (c) the return fare from the campsite to Perth? 3, What is the fare allowed to be charged for taxis (a) between Northam and the campsite (single fare), (b) between the campsite and Perth (return fare)? 4, Will the Transport Board take action to prevent charges being levied in excess of the amounts allowed?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, The Transport Board has fixed the fare chargeable by omnibus proprietors between Northam and the military camp. Taxi proprietors are not authorised to charge separate fares and the Transport Board has no control over their operations. Neither omnibus nor taxi proprietors are authorised to carry passengers at separate fares between the

camp or Northam town and Perth. 2, (a) The approved fare chargeable by omnibus proprietors between Northam and the camp is 5d. single; (b) No; (c) See answer to question (1) (third paragraph). 3, (a) and (b) See answer to question (1) (second paragraph). 4, The Board has no information at present to show that the approved fare between Northam and the camp is being exceeded, but will take action accordingly if any such evidence is available. The Board has issued permits for conveyance of soldiers from Northam camp to Perth and return by omnibuses, but these are for transport on a charter basis only and, if separate fares are charged, they are being charged illegally.

QUESTION—RUBBER SUPPLIES.

Mr. CROSS asked the Minister for Industrial Development: 1, Is he aware that in the last war (1914-18) thousands of tons of secondhand rubber were exported to Japan? 2, Is it a fact that, due to the loss of Malaya, shortage of rubber supplies is likely to become acute? 3, Does he know that very considerable quantities of old rubber exist in this State? 4, If so, what steps are being taken to collect and retreat that vital requirement?

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT replied: 1, No. 2, Yes. 3, It is known that a fair amount of such rubber exists. 4, The Commonwealth Department of Supply and Development has arranged to undertake the collection and treatment of scrap rubber throughout the Commonwealth.

QUESTION—STARTING PRICE BETTING.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER asked the Minister for Justice: As he has assured the House that Magistrates cannot be directed in the administration of the law in regard to starting-price betting operations, will the Government consider the early introduction of a Bill to insure uniform punishment for this offence, and imprisonment for a second offence?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE replied: This is a matter which will receive consideration when the next legislative programme is being prepared.

QUESTION—NAVAL DOCK SITE.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Works: Have sufficient investigations yet been made in Western Australia to ascertain for certain whether there are suitable sites here for the construction of a naval graving dock equal to that now under construction at Sydney?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: For security reasons, specific information of this type is not available for publication.

QUESTION—RAILWAYS.

As to Locomotives for Commonwealth.

Hon. N. KEENAN asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is it a fact that this Western Australian Government has supplied locomotive engines to the Commonwealth Government? 2, If yes, when were these engines handed over? 3, How many of such engines have been so handed over?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: For security reasons, the distribution of rolling stock throughout Australia is not available for publication.

QUESTION—BUTTER-FAT.

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for Lands: Will he lay on the Table of the House all papers available regarding second-grade butter-fat and the disposal of and payment for same and the percentage it bears to total production in this State?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: There are many files dealing with this subject as there are many aspects. After I hear a reply to the case to be submitted by the hon. member for Pingelly, all these papers may be available to members.

QUESTION—CIVIL DEFENCE.

As to Perth and Subiaco.

Mr. NEEDHAM (without notice) asked the Minister for Mines: 1, What particular authorities are responsible for the issue of diagrammatic types of part or wholly underground A.R.P. shelters as constructed in both Perth and Subiaco municipalities? 2, Will an assurance be forthcoming that all such diagrams retrospective and prospective shall bear the stamp of the issuing office together with the signature of

the authors? 3, Was the service of the Public Works Department implemented to provide black-out conditions to a particular building intended to house a very large staff, possibly of voluntary workers, during air-raid conditions? 4, If so, would it be reasonable to consider the subject from the standpoint of security and accept the terms of the Civil Defence Council's code in constructing what can only be regarded as one of the most important shelters in the State?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: The hon. member was good enough to notify me of his intention to ask this question and my reply is as follows: 1, The Shelters Subcommittee of the Civil Defence Council makes available to the public and local authorities typical drawings of A.R.P. shelters. Local authorities adapt these to their special circumstances. 2, Answered by No. 1. 3, Yes. 4, Yes, action is in course accordingly.

MOTION—PRINTING MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

As to State's War Effort.

Debate resumed from the previous day on the following motion by the Premier:—

That the Ministerial Statement be printed.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly—continued)
[11.11.] I thank members for the opportunity given me of continuing my remarks today. When we adjourned last night, I said that I wanted to mention one or two matters which are pressing very heavily on the farming districts at the present time. When a farmer is about to commence his year's operations, he has first of all to review his position and make out a balance sheet to estimate his expenditure and revenue. This is necessary in order to ascertain what amount of work he plans to do and how he is to meet his various commitments. At present the farmers are unable to do this by reason of the fact that they have not at their disposal certain essential information.

Take a wheat farmer who has been told that he has to reduce the area on which he grows wheat. He does not, in many instances, know the area until he gets the license to grow the wheat and, until that license is in his possession, he has no justification for planting his crop. Last year licenses were issued in August and September—months

after the crop had been sown—and mostly they were for a lesser area than the farmers had put in, with the result that when harvesting time came, each farmer was paid for the wheat produced only in proportion to the quantity he was licensed to grow. Suppose he had a license to sow 300 acres and he put in 400 acres, one-fourth was deducted from the quantity of wheat delivered. It is an impossible proposition for a farmer, in those circumstances, to order his super. First of all he cannot satisfy the super merchant that he will get sufficient revenue from his crop to meet his commitments. The super manufacturer says, "I will not stand out of my payments and, until you show what your likely revenue is, I cannot deal with you."

Then there is the question of the price the farmer is going to get for his wheat. We have had no definite information that he is going to get any fixed price. The Minister for Lands, in reply to a question a few days ago, said he had no definite information that the price of wheat this year would be any different from the price last year. On the contrary, he had no definite information that the price this year will be the same as that of last year. The farmer must know what price he is going to get per bushel before he can make up his estimates and go to his creditors and ask for credit to carry on next season. If he goes to the Agricultural Bank or to any other bank, the first question asked is, "What revenue are you going to get?" Until he knows the price he is going to receive for his wheat it is impossible for him to make up a balance sheet, estimate his receipts and expenditure, or get his requirements.

I admit that wheat is not the only commodity he grows. Take the case of wool: The woolgrower knows of the existence of the agreement with the British Government, and is fully aware that unless the existing arrangement is altered he will get the same price as he received last year. He knows what quantity of wool his sheep will cut per head, and is therefore able to form a fairly accurate estimate of the return he will receive from his wool. With farming generally, even down the Great Southern which is not a recognised wheat-growing area, wheat forms a considerable portion of the farmer's revenue, and unless he can make an estimate of the re-

turn he will get from his wheat crop, it is impossible for him to go to merchants and make the necessary arrangements for next season's work.

Another question exercising the farmer's mind is that of the payment he is to receive on the area he does not cultivate. In order to restrict the growing of wheat as far as possible, the farmer has been told that he will be licensed to grow only a certain proportion of his usual crop. Roughly speaking, one-third is to be cut out, and he is to be compensated for the area not sown to the extent of 1s. per bushel. But how is that going to be computed? Will it be on last year's average or the average of the property over a number of years? Will it be on the State's average? Or what is to be the basis? The farmer must have that information before he can estimate his probable revenue.

The Minister has told us that payment will be arranged on a zone basis, but then he read a letter he had received from the Minister for Commerce in which the Commonwealth Minister asked him to put up a suggestion on behalf of the State, clearly indicating that the information is not available. I am aware that the Minister cannot give the information—this is a Federal matter—but I beg of the Minister to take up the matter with the Federal Government and point out the hopeless position in which our farming industry is placed through lack of this information, and demand that the information be made available, at the latest, before the end of this week. If the Minister cannot get the information, I ask him to give that fact the usual publicity that he has been giving to his activities.

The Minister for Lands: I do not like to forecast anything, but I have not the information, although I have repeatedly asked for it.

Mr. SEWARD: I believe that is the case, but for some reason, during recent weeks, the Minister has been rather silent as regards the agricultural industry. Probably this is because he has not the information to give. Still, it would be better for him to say publicly that he cannot give the information, instead of having our farmers running down the Minister for not giving it.

The Minister for Lands: I do not mind that at all.

Mr. SEWARD: But I do. The Minister has always given me the utmost assistance and has supplied any information in his possession, and I do not want to see him wrongly condemned for not giving information when he has not the information to give. By simply giving publicity to the fact that he has not the information but is endeavouring to get it, he will allay the fears of the farmers in that respect, and they will know that the blame does not lie at the door of the Minister.

Another point I wish to make is that although the Minister has not been able to give this information, a statement was made by the chairman of the Agricultural Bank Commissioners a few weeks ago. Mr. Donovan is a man I hold in the highest esteem but, with all due respect to him, he is not the man from whom such statements should come. He said that the farmer could put in one-third less of his usual area under wheat but if, when the Federal Government makes its announcement, the reduction is not one-third, it is the Federal Government's announcement the farmer has to accept, not Mr. Donovan's. It is only fair that the statement should come from the responsible authority so that the farmer will know definitely where he stands.

Another matter has come into prominence lately to which I wish briefly to refer. This is going to have serious consequences on some of our country towns. A few weeks ago a conference was held between the Commonwealth Government and representatives of the Associated Banks, and the result was that the banks were asked to close certain branches throughout the country. It was stated that this was being done for national security reasons in order to release as much manpower as possible for war service. Late in March it was announced that the only bank conducting business in Kondinin, a town in my electorate, was to close its office there, and that the business was to be transferred to Kulin, a town about 15 miles away. That would be a very serious matter for Kondinin—indeed, it would be for any other town similarly affected; in fact, I go so far as to say that it will ruin the business people there, because if the residents have to go to another town to do their banking, naturally it will follow that they will do their other business in that town and will not go into Kondinin at all. As soon as the notification appeared that the bank at Kondinin was clos-

ing, I telegraphed to the Minister for War Organisation of Industry (Mr. Dedman) in the following terms:—

National Bank closing its Kondinin branch which is the only bank serving a large farming district. Stop. This action is directly opposed to the promise given by you to Bank Officers' deputation on third March. Stop. Proposed action if not stopped will ruin business men concerned. Stop. Will you please take action to retain the only bank in Kondinin?

To that telegram I received the following reply:—

Referring to your lettergram of first April banks requested on 25th March not to close any branches until the whole matter investigated by my department. Stop. It is not my intention to remove banking facilities from point where this will cause dislocation of business. Stop. Further instructions have been issued to the banks.

To that I telegraphed:—

Despite your assurances National Bank today closed Kondinin branch.

That was on the 5th April. The Minister, in his telegram to me, stated that the closing of banks at points where it would cause dislocation of business was not in keeping with the Commonwealth Government's policy. The Minister wrote to me in that respect, and I also had the opportunity to read the report of the deputation from the Bank Officers' Association which waited on the Minister. The Federal Minister then made it perfectly clear to that association that it was not intended to close a bank if it were the only bank operating in a town, but that the regulation was being brought in to close banks where perhaps five or six were operating in a country town, if that number was thought to be out of proportion to the population which they were serving. Since then, I have received another telegram from the Minister to the following effect:—

Referring to your telegram of the 6th inst.—

That is the one notifying him of the closing of the bank at Kondinin—

—it is proposed to call conference with the Trading Banks to discuss closing of branches.

That is the position as it stands today. Therefore, the closing of branch banks in country districts, so far as I have been able to ascertain, has not been done in accordance with the National Security regulation, which was really designed for the closing of branches where there were too many doing business in one particular place.

Since then another unfortunate matter came under my notice. Certain banks have decided to close their branches in some of the country towns, and it has been arranged that if bank A closes its branch in one town, it shall transfer its business to bank B in that town, while bank B will close in a different town and transfer its business to bank A. In that way banking facilities in country towns would be gradually reduced. That perhaps is a matter for the banks concerned; they would probably close branches if the business offering did not warrant their continuance. But the effect will be this: A person may have given a mortgage to Bank A, which will close its branch. He will, therefore, have to arrange to discharge that mortgage and give another one to the bank continuing in business. He will consequently be mulcted in payment of fees, depending upon the amount of the mortgage. He might have to pay as much as £25 or £30 in fees. I would like to know whether the Agricultural Bank will find these fees, or whether any bank will.

Even if the borrower is accommodated, he will have to pay the debt at some future date. That is a very serious matter for some of our country towns, and I make no apology for bringing it to the notice of the House. It is only one of the many difficulties under which country towns are labouring. In passing, I may say I am not one of those who want to rant and rail against the banks, which have played an important part in the development of our country districts during the past 50 or 60 years. Certain reforms are, however, necessary in banking legislation today, and it behoves the State to see that those changes do not detrimentally affect the interests of the people of the State. I warn the Government that the position in country districts is becoming serious today. Apart altogether from war influences, people are leaving the country; farms are being abandoned; there are empty shops in country towns and business people are closing down their businesses. Unless this is put a stop to, the economic effects upon the State will be very grave.

There is only one other matter to which I wish to refer and that is liquor control. This matter has come very prominently before the public in recent days. I do not for an instant say that the blame for the trouble lies at the door of the State Government. I say without fear of contra-

That is the unfortunate position which has arisen; and, as a result, the State Government had to step in and say that all hotels must close at 6 o'clock. That was a most unjust and unfair decision to reach, because after all there are other people in the community besides the few hoodlums who are responsible for this trouble. Other people in this community have some rights. For instance, we had a long sitting yesterday, and when we adjourned at 6.20 it was not possible to get a drink anywhere. There are many people employed until 6 o'clock, including business men who do not wish to drink during business hours, and these people are told that when they finish at 6 o'clock they cannot have a drink, just because a few men cannot behave themselves.

I was not here during the whole of the time the member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith) was speaking yesterday, but I think he gave utterance to an opinion I hold very strongly, namely, that the publican has some rights. In many instances hotel-keepers have paid big prices to go into the premises they occupy, and are paying a high rental, and we have no right to step in and say that their hours of trading shall be curtailed without providing them with any compensation. It is a most iniquitous thing. Moreover, if trading hours are to be reduced, the hotelkeeper is justified in demanding a reduction of his rent. Why punish people in this way—and it is a very serious situation for many folk—just because a few cannot behave themselves? The Government was entirely wrong in overlooking the Minister for Railways on this occasion. I hold him responsible for many things that have happened in this respect. The Minister for Railways: In the hotel time?

Mr. SPEWMARD: The Minister cannot deny that he has had continual representations over the last two years for a prevention of the sale of bottled drink to soldiers travelling on trains, and that he has refused to accede to the request. I challenge the Minister or the Government to lay on the table of the House a return showing the destruction caused in railway carriages by drunken soldiers. Let the Government table the returns so that people can see the damage that has been done.

Mr. Cross: They have fallen down on their job.

The door of the military authorities. The greater proportion of the blame lies at

Mr. SPEWMARD: I was a soldier during the 1914-18 war and I say, without hesitation, that we never in those days witnessed the scenes we have witnessed here recently. Some time ago I wrote to the General Officer Commanding in Western Australia calling his attention to the state in which members of the military forces have been allowed to drift in this State. They did not seem to have the slightest regard for the King's uniform. During the 1914-18 war a man was taught to respect his uniform; it was the King's uniform, and if he walked down the street improperly dressed—for instance, if his top button was undone—he was immediately pulled up by a picket, ordered to fasten the button and told that he must keep himself properly dressed. The members of the military forces in those days were altogether different from the members of the forces we have seen wandering about the streets of Perth during the last few months. These would not be a credit to any army. They are a disgrace to our military officials. It is the laxity that has been allowed to creep in, because of the failure of responsible officers to take charge of the military forces in this town, which has prevented the civil police in many instances from carrying out their duties.

As an illustration of what I mean, I was going along Hay-street two or three weeks ago at about a quarter to ten p.m. and saw a crowd of 50 or 60 standing outside one of the leading hotels. There was a decided row; one could hear loud voices being raised. About 70 per cent. or 80 per cent. of the crowd were soldiers. I tried to see what the trouble was. One policeman was standing in the middle of the crowd and matters certainly did not look bright. After a while I was able to ascertain that the trouble was being caused by two hoodlum civilians, as drunk as they could be. The policeman dared not touch them because, had he done so, a riot would have ensued. Had the military authorities been carrying out their duty, the soldiers could have been put out of the way by a picket.

Pickets were unknown in this city until the last week or so. What those unruly fellows really wanted was a good flooring.

The Minister for Railways: I will take full responsibility for everything I have done.

Mr. SEWARD: I am not worrying about what the Minister has done but what he has not done.

The Minister for Railways: I will take full responsibility for that, too.

The Premier: What about drunken civilians?

Mr. SEWARD: I am dealing with the military at the moment. If the military authorities had done their job, the civil police could have operated. The failure of the military to control the soldiers prevented the civil police from doing anything. Admittedly an alteration was made on the Great Southern line where the sale of bottled liquor was prevented for about a week. But that was only when an unfortunate man nearly severed his arm by smashing a window because he was too incapable of knowing how to open the door. The member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Doney) was on that train, and an ambulance had to be summoned to get the man to hospital.

Mr. Doney: I was covered with the man's blood.

Mr. SEWARD: The situation was so bad that women would not travel by the train. That is only because a small minority had been allowed to have its own way. Because the military authorities have refrained from controlling the unruly element the good name of the soldiers has been besmirched. The military must accept a large amount of the blame for the trouble that occurred in Perth. Fortunately since members of this party sent a telegram to the Minister for War, pickets have been appointed. I saw the first picket I have ever seen during this war marching down Hay-street last night. If the authorities persevere in that direction much of the trouble will be overcome. I consider that the position of the hotel-keeper and the rights of the general public should be given consideration when hours of trading are decided upon.

MR. DONEY (Williams-Narrogin) [11.35]: The Country Party makes no apology for having initiated the agitation that led to the calling of this special sitting.

Mr. Withers: What? Who said that?

Mr. DONEY: I think the nature of the valuable information which has been forthcoming, particularly from Ministers who have spoken, was ample justification for what this party did.

Mr. Withers: You do kid yourselves!

Mr. DONEY: My only regret is that members on the Government side of the House have refrained from participating in the debate.

Mr. Thorn: They have been gagged.

Mr. DONEY: The Premier made a highly interesting speech with regard to the war situation as it affects this State. It must be admitted, however, that he told us little we did not previously know. That, of course, was because the Premier was required to make more or less lengthy statements but at the same time was denied the use of essential material. The Premier's excuse no doubt is—and it is quite a proper one too, I should imagine—that the debates in Parliament are of a public character and that he is therefore hamstrung by an enforced discretion. The Premier intimated that confidential war information would be of no use to members of this House because they would not be able, or rather would have too much sense, I hope, to pass on such information to their people.

But the Premier missed the point, which is not that we would wish to pass on that information, but that the possession of such knowledge would enable us to give sounder advice in our constituencies and prevent us from giving unsound advice. It would also enable us to deny or at least discount much of the rumour, misunderstanding and stupid talk that secures credence among a certain type of people, and in the long run does a good deal of harm. It is not that we expect to share the confidence of the G.O.C., but we could have been told certain facts without perhaps being given an explanation of how those facts were strategically related. I think that if the Premier had drawn up a statement on that basis, and had referred it to the G.O.C. for censorship, members of this House would have been quite prepared to receive that censored statement as the best the Premier could do.

Judging from general conversation in the lobbies, members had hoped for more complete details in regard to the work taking place or that should be taking place in the Midland Junction Workshops. That, after all, is our principal contribution of any size to the war effort in respect of

the production of munitions and armaments. The fact that the Premier said practically nothing about what was happening at Midland Junction would tend to leave the impression, I am afraid, that there is much in that connection that he prefers not to disclose. Certain it is that the Minister for Industrial Development gave a good deal of data with respect to what parts are produced at Midland Junction, but he gave no figures. He mentioned the names of the articles produced but would not make it clear whether one, 1,000 or 10,000 were being produced. I believe that in answer to a question by way of interjection the Premier said that if members of this House only knew what had been done or what was being done, they would be astonished. That is quite likely correct, but the question is whether members would be satisfied.

I do not like the amount of talk by Ministers and others—outside as well as here—to the effect that we and the people in the Eastern States are doing an amazingly satisfactory job with regard to war production. I cannot help feeling that that is a lot of nonsense. I consider that all this boasting about 100 per cent. war effort does us no good. There is certainly no such thing in this State or in the Eastern States of anything approaching a 100 per cent. effort. If what we are doing here and what is being done on the other side, is the best we can do, then the good Lord help us, because it is pitifully inadequate to the situation! It is no use pretending that we are flat out. We have not gone half-way towards that achievement.

I admit that in certain directions there are potentially bright spots. The Minister for Industrial Development for instance gave a very encouraging review of the alunite deposits at Lake Campion. Even in that respect there was no promise of any immediate use being made of those deposits, because I think he indicated that not until at least six months have elapsed will we even be able to put raw alunite deposits on the market, whereas so far as the alumina extract is concerned, it will probably—though the Minister did not say so—he at least nine months before it can be sent on to wherever it is going to be processed. I do not wish to grumble about the general situation there. I agree with those who have said that so far as can be seen the Government or the responsible Minister who conducted the negotiations with those interested, did so in a sensible way.

Another bright spot is the manner in which people in the country centres have set about taking precautions against air raids. The serious, systematic and enthusiastic way in which the ladies of the first aid posts, the volunteer defence corps and the men of the A.R.P. have conducted black-outs and mock raids is heartening in the extreme. They are doing all that work without any financial assistance from the department concerned, which is administered by the Minister for Mines. I hesitate to introduce a discordant note here, but it should be said that the treatment meted out to quite a number of country centres by the department controlled by the Minister in charge of civil defence was, at least in the days immediately following the commencement of the war with Japan, disheartening in the extreme, very intolerant and, so far as some officials were concerned, of a slightly discourteous character. It was also very hard indeed for people in the country areas to take, seeing that they set enthusiastically about what they thought to be, and what has been shown to be, a very necessary but somewhat difficult job. No doubt there are other bright spots in the State's industrial and general outlook which might come to mind if one were to think long enough about the subject, but whether or no, there has certainly been a good deal of waste, muddling and misunderstanding which, in the aggregate, has increased difficulties exceedingly.

Reverting to the position at Midland Junction, there are rumours that in the workshops the men are often idle for long periods when they are required to kill time by any old method. There may be quite a lot of exaggeration wrapped up in the rumours that are going round, but in the persistent tales that are heard about men willing to work—it is not a question of laziness—but being required to stand aside, there may be quite a lot of truth. I understand that work in the shops is constantly held up by repeated delays in the supply of parts and materials that have to be brought from the Eastern States. Those delays are largely caused through the congestion on the railway system, which is a natural condition in times such as the present, and therefore cannot be avoided.

I have been told that a good many men, highly qualified in their respective grades of work, have been drawn from the railway

service and placed in the Midland Junction Workshops. The present condition of the railway rolling stock tends to show that that was a most ill-advised action on the part of whoever was responsible. The Premier knows that the principal job of the men at the Midland Junction Railway Workshops was to cater for the repairs necessary to engines brought off the track. There seems to be a quite senseless urge in Western Australia that as much of the defence work as possible should be taken from Eastern States concerns and carried out in this State, irrespective of whether or not the work could be undertaken satisfactorily, profitably and economically here. I think that line of action is most stupid, particularly in times such as the present. Why not give up all such profitless work? Let it be undertaken in the Eastern States where the materials, the plant and the parts are already available? I refer, of course, to those jobs that are affected by lack of material within this State. I therefore suggest to the Minister for Industrial Development that he should investigate the position at Midland Junction with the object of discontinuing there such jobs as could be more economically carried out in the Eastern States. I think members generally will agree that it does not matter one tiny little bit in what State a job is done—provided it is carried out soundly and with the least possible loss of time. Of course, while proceeding along those lines, the object should also be to release railway mechanics so that they would be able to carry out the repair work necessary on engines, to which I have already alluded.

Members generally, particularly those who, through living in country districts, have to travel frequently on the railways, know how serious has become the position regarding repairs. Those country members are aware that railwaymen are working far longer hours than normally, and that enginedrivers, firemen and guards in particular are undergoing a severe physical strain. As the work on the railways is increasing, so the number of men to do essential work is decreasing. It does not need a great deal of thought to foresee the disaster towards which we are heading. As the member for Pingelly (Mr. Seward) has pointed out on a number of occasions—he has even done so during the current debate—the number of engines that break down is alarming.

Mr. Watts: The break-downs occur with monotonous regularity.

Mr. DONEY: I would not altogether agree with the hon. member's statement, because I know of a number of recent occasions when trains have been promptly on time both respecting arrivals and departures, although such occasions are not now so frequent as they were in pre-war days. In support of the point of view held by the member for Katanning (Mr. Watts), I recall, however, that a train on the Great Southern left my station 25 minutes late and, for some reason I have not been able to ascertain, was three hours and ten minutes late on arrival in Perth. The strain on railway rolling stock, particularly on engines, will be heavier still, particularly in view of the announcement indicating the assumption of virtual control by the Commonwealth Government over railway transport in this State. We must admit it would be futile to blame the railway management for the existing state of affairs. Military demands have not only meant that the engines and rolling stock generally must be worked for longer hours to haul heavier loads, but it also means that the number of engines at the disposal of the State has actually lessened. I could say exactly where some engines have gone, but I think that information could better be given by the Premier or the Minister for Railways.

As I see it, it is not at all unlikely that soon the number of rail journeys in this State will have to be reduced from the number we have been accustomed to under normal schedule, so that a few engines at a time can be put aside for repair and overhaul before a more serious and extensive situation can arise. We do not know what awaits us, but it is easily possible that within a week, a fortnight or a month we shall have to depend on safe and sound rolling stock and a staff of able and energetic railway officials to take women and children from places of peril to centres of safety further inland, and at the same time to take our troops and munitions to the spot where danger threatens or, if it should so happen, to the point where the enemy has struck. In these circumstances, the problem of repairs to rolling stock is one of prime national and personal importance.

At this stage I desire to deal with a question that has already been ably traversed by the member for Pingelly. I refer to the subject of bulk handling which was introduced into the debate a few days ago

by the Minister for Lands, when he announced the Federal Government's decision to assume control of bulk handling installations throughout Australia. I was indeed glad to learn that the Minister was wise enough not to associate himself with the reasons given by the Federal Minister for assuming that control, and I compliment him on that attitude. What his attitude may be when he has had an opportunity further to investigate the position, I do not know; but we are all aware that bulk handling involves highly technical and complex work which is understood by few people indeed, and certainly not by the Federal Minister who, I understand, has not previously been associated with wheat and has been in his present office but a comparatively few short weeks. In face of the Minister's evident ignorance on such matters, he very quickly arrived at the most amazing decision that, in the interests of the nation, these highly important instrumentalities must be forcibly taken from those who understand their operations, and be handed over to the control of a Government that knows nothing whatever about such work. All that has been done despite the fact that there was a unanimous vote against any such control on the part of members of the Federal Wheat Board.

Included in this installation is Co-operative Bulk Handling, Limited of Western Australia. That concern is known throughout the wheat world, both oversea and in Australia. It is known for the excellence of its management, and is equally favourably known for the smallness of its capitalisation, and for the unusual facts that the system actually shows a profit and belongs to the farmers who use it. All members on these benches and members on the benches to my left, and also members on the other side of the House knowing the position, must object very strongly indeed to the recent proposal, which so far as I can see leaves the disturbing impression that under cover of the emergencies of the war a Government on the other side of Australia is setting out upon a policy of nationalisation of industry. The present situation is highly critical. I do not wish to touch on controversial grounds, but it happens to be necessary to the point I am making.

Following Mr. Ward's suggestion for the nationalisation of the coal industry and Mr. Curtin's announced intention to impose uniform taxation—meaning, so far as we are concerned, the taking away from us of the right to govern ourselves in the important aspect of finance—we had Mr. Scully's decision to take over bulk handling. These facts cause this side of the House to hold a suspicion that the Government on the other side of the continent is using the present situation to further one of the objects of its political desires. If it could be shown that this proposal will in any way minister to the national well being, then, like every other member of this Chamber, I would be indeed glad to support it. But in the circumstances as I see them, I can do nothing other than regard this business as a piece of most audacious bushranging—I cannot describe it more accurately as I see it. I regard it as an utterly destructive proposal. It infringes upon our State economy and upon our right to govern ourselves to our own advantage, providing, of course, that we do nothing whatever inconsistent with the requirements of the war effort.

I hold the opinion that it is not only the Federal Minister who is to blame. I believe that strong and wealthy bagged wheat interests in the Eastern States paved the way for this—but quite unwittingly, mind! Had those interests known that their machinations would have this effect, they might have adopted a different course. To understand the position I think it necessary that the House should know something about the construction of the Australian Wheat Board, which was brought into being three years ago by Senator McLeay for the purpose of controlling the Australian wheat trade. I recall, too, it was said at the time that the Senator put on that board every related business interest: that is, growers, merchants, co-operators and so forth, with the object, I understand, of securing that the several conflicting interests would have the effect of cancelling each other out, as it were. Anyhow, it does not appear as though that effect has ensued, because the whole business has become one of acute antagonism between the strongly entrenched bagged wheat interests and the newer and therefore less powerfully entrenched interests concerned with bulk handling. For a long time appearances have suggested that the Dreyfus-

Bunge group, the cornsack and bagged wheat group with world affiliations has gradually passed into a position of control of the board, but not complete control—I want to make that plain—because the co-operative group, which is really the Co-operative Bulk Handling Co. of Western Australia, a small but very knowledgeable and extremely pugnacious group, put up a brilliant resistance. Had this group not possessed those qualifications, it would probably have been submerged long ago.

It has always looked to me as though the bagged wheat group adopted as its policy the discrediting of bulk handling, which, as members on this side of the House are aware, yielded practically nothing to the financial returns of that group. The bagged wheat group wanted the State to revert to bagged wheat, which had, as we here know to our sorrow, for very many years yielded an extremely heavy rake-off to that group from every country in the world growing wheat. It was, of course, with the object of curing that position that bulk handling installations came into being throughout Australia. The bagged wheat group aimed to discredit bulk handling through the agency of the weevils, by smothering the whole issue, as it were, with weevils. The allegation was that weevils in bulk wheat were assuming unmanageable proportions. It is no wonder that in those circumstances Mr. Bill Diver, speaking under the stress of accumulated irritations said, "I see no weevil, I fear no weevil, I feed no weevil." I do not know that that remark met the situation fully, but it was certainly apt.

In pursuance of their policy the bagged wheat merchants were instrumental, I believe though I am speaking from memory, in sending over to this State Messrs. Perrett, Wilson and Cameron, men who were quite unfitted for the job, as was proven later, but who reported on the weevil situation here in the most condemnatory terms. The real object of their report can be gauged when it is disclosed that Mr. Cameron was on the staff and of course in the constant pay of Dreyfus and Co. whose profits to a large extent go, I believe, oversea. There were at the same time three other men who came along to investigate and report—Messrs. Tilt and Hamblin were two of them. Representing more directly the farming interest, those three investigators might have been expected to know a little more about the job. Their report indicated that in respect of weevil the

position was normal enough, which meant that their views were largely favourable to bulk handling.

How outrageously misleading, to put it mildly, was the earlier report is proved by the fact that when the big silo at Fremantle came to be emptied—a silo containing wheat that was two years old, and therefore in a condition likely to set up weevil growth—the silo through which the bagged wheat people expected the propriety of their charges to be demonstrated—when that silo was opened for export it was found that 99.7 per cent. of the wheat was passed as f.a.q., without any difficulty. Well 99.7 per cent. is of course as approximate to 100 per cent. as can well be imagined. I dare say that a great deal of the .3 per cent. representing the balance was dust and matter of that kind. Thus there could not possibly have been a better report from the standpoint of Co-operative Bulk Handling. It was, of course, in the main, a great compliment to the care that company exercised in its work.

I do not know whether I have made it plain that while the Minister is responsible, technically at all events, for the stand on behalf of nationalisation of industry, it was the very mean attitude of the bagged wheat merchants that presented him, unwittingly I admit again, with that idea. Quite deliberately the bagged wheat merchants sought to create the notion that bulk handling was at the mercy of the weevil. As a result, the Minister gained the impression that the situation was ripe for exploitation, not from a commercial but from a political aspect. His troubles, of course, about the weevils! I do not think he bothered a great deal about that phase. I believe that Mr. Scully, the Commonwealth Minister for Commerce, is an honest man. By those who know him I am told that he is. But certainly he is not a man competent to handle a complex situation such as represented by the need for the disposal of the nation's wheat despite existing transport obstacles. It is known to me and to other members sitting on this side of the House that Mr. Scully all too frequently changes his mind. That is a disadvantage in a public man carrying Mr. Scully's responsibilities. He appears to have a mania for publishing his ideas before he is sure of them. Members will agree that we have ample evidence of that lately in his mishandling of this season's wheat cropping arrangements.

If the Minister had restricted his interference to the ill-run and very expensive installations in New South Wales and Victoria, and left our nation's vineyard alone, the position would have been bad enough, but not nearly so bad as it is now. Members can easily judge what feelings will be aroused in Western Australia over this business. We know that wheatgrowers generally in these days lead a drab and disheartening existence. One thing we are justifiably proud of is our co-op. bulk handling which belongs to the farmers, and is being run by good reliable farming men who have graduated, as it were, to the directorate. Co-operative Bulk Handling has done what no other company has done; it has succeeded. Instead of creating admiration on the part of the Federal Government and of its competitors, it seems to me that its success has only aroused the cupidity of the Federal Government, and the jealousy of its competitors. It so happens, too, that it can handle wheat at two-thirds of a penny per bushel; no one else can do that.

I am not sure whether the member for Pingelly (Mr. Seward) mentioned this, but in respect to the operations of Co-operative Bulk Handling I point out that all profits—that is in excess of the costs—go back into the company with the object of reducing its capitalisation. That company belongs, not to any private concern, but to the farmers of this State. It very much annoys members on this side of the House that the Federal Government should have chosen for an attack a thriving concern which has been built up by the wheatgrowers of the State over the last 10 or 11 years. If the Government must do that sort of thing, why does it not have the pluck to tackle the bagged wheat interests, which do not give anything like the assistance to the nation in times like these that is given by the Co-operative Bulk Handling concern?

In the matter of manpower there is ample scope for intervention with regard to bagged wheat. Bagged wheat interests in the other States frequently have some five or six agents competing for business at one siding. Another phase of this confiscatory movement is that it is likely considerably to increase handling costs in Western Australia, for under the threatened new system costs will, I understand, be pooled, and we here in Western Australia will have to bear our proportionate share of the far higher costs of

the less expertly run bulk installations in the Eastern States.

I point out that practically the whole of the weevil infestation in wheat is found in the depots controlled directly and exclusively by the Federal body and not by Co-operative Bulk Handling. That being the case, it is difficult to understand how the general position of insect infestation would be improved by bringing more facilities under the control of the Federal authority. There is a point I wish to clarify with regard to storage charges. This is in regard to wheat stored in bins belonging to the bulk handling company as compared with that stored by mills. Co-operative Bulk Handling, Ltd., receives storage charges amounting to one-sixteenth of a penny per bushel per week as from the 15th April. The mills on the other hand receive one penny per bushel on the wheat stored during the whole year.

MR. TRIAT (Mt. Magnet) [12.20]: I am pleased that the House has been called together for a discussion on matters of vital interest to the welfare of the State. I am, however, disappointed not to find a larger number of members in their seats this morning. I was rather surprised that some members should indicate that they were responsible for Parliament being called together, that they should have claimed to have been the ones who led to that being done. I think every member was anxious that Parliament should be called together so that we might have these discussions. No one section of the House can claim credit for this, for it is something I think we all desired.

Mr. Doney: Members on your side do not seem to have availed themselves much of the opportunity afforded.

Mr. TRIAT: All parties of the House are equally interested in these questions.

Mr. Patrick: What about your announcement in the Press?

Mr. TRIAT: All we were interested in was the endeavour to have Parliament called together as quickly as possible.

The Minister for Works: All parties asked that the House be called together.

Mr. Berry: It does not signify who was responsible for the reassembly of Parliament.

Mr. TRIAT: I am at all events pleased that the opportunity to discuss these questions has now been given to us. Many of the

speeches we have heard during the debate have really dealt with private members' business. That may be a good idea, for members come from different parts of the State and have different arguments to advance. I am surprised that more has not been said about the welfare of the country from the point of view of the war. I have not been satisfied with the endeavours that have been made either in this State or in the rest of Australia. For a period people were under the impression that Australia was not likely to suffer from enemy attacks, and that impression prevailed until the Japs actually did attack Western Australia. Everyone then rushed about and said that we must prevent an invasion and must immediately set about providing air raid shelters.

Apart from the erection of sand bunds and air raid shelters, there seems to have been very little activity in the direction of protecting the country. We recall that volunteers were asked to dig trenches on the Esplanade on Sunday morning for the prevention of enemy landings. People were asked to bring their shovels and perform the work. Whilst men were digging those trenches cricket balls were flying out on the Esplanade. Very little seems to have been done for the protection of the State against an invasion. Many people assume that we are going to be left alone. Those who have followed the trend of events and understood the tactics of the Japanese will appreciate that they are bent on securing all possible oil, tin and iron resources. If they once master the southern seas, they will then endeavour to conquer India. It may be that the Japanese think Australia is at present too weak in either defence or offence to worry about just now. If they had not other things to do, they would have been here long ago. Evidently their intention is to leave the weaker countries until they have tackled and, if possible, overcome the stronger countries.

I remember saying some 12 months ago in this Chamber that we were just playing at munition manufacture. What I said then contained more truth than I thought it did. We have been told all about the wonderful work that is being done at Welshpool, but nothing has yet been produced there. I understand that nothing will be produced there until next July.

We have been told that no machinery is yet available for munition manufacture. We are also told that we may have to wait for the machinery to come from some other country. If that is so, we might as well allow that other country to make the munitions for us. My opinion, however, is that we have all the means required in the State for the manufacture of munitions. We are a small part of the Commonwealth that is endeavouring to do something in a small way. Other States are turning out munitions, although within their borders they possess no better qualifications or facilities than we possess.

Mr. Doney: Did we not lack essential materials?

Mr. TRIAT: We do not lack anything the other States have except the class of coal required. Indeed, there are some commodities that we possess here that are not found in the other States.

Mr. Doney: Does the Minister know that?

Mr. TRIAT: No doubt he does. He has experts to advise him, whereas I am not an expert. We have in this State ingredients that have had to be imported by the other States for the fabrication of many things, but we have not utilised them and have allowed them to be taken from us. I wish to quote now a statement made in January of last year by Mr. Forgan Smith, the Premier of Queensland. He said—

Queensland is not a mendicant of any kind. We only want a fair deal in common with every State in Australia, and if we do not get a fair deal we are going to kick up hell about it until we get it. "Too late" is not going to be my epitaph.

The Premier of Queensland then went on to tell what had been done in that State, and continued—

The Australian workmen have already done tremendous things in that direction, which so-called experts deemed impossible. They sent a Commission to Queensland, and it reported that there were no machine tools in Queensland to work with, and that there were no master gauges available; yet we are turning out master gauges and machine tools today. We were the first to build ships during the war, and those in our shipyards owned by the people of Queensland.

In Queensland there were neither tools nor master gauges, but the authorities in that State did not import those articles but set about manufacturing them. The most essential thing is for us to put forth every possible effort to win the war, and defend this

country in the event of aggression. There is no doubt we shall be attacked. I maintain that the Japanese have left us alone only because they are of opinion that they can come along and take us whenever they desire to do so. We know what happened to the "Sydney" and to other units of the Australian Fleet. Let us wake up to the position. Let us treat these yellow men as an enemy of some importance, which they undoubtedly are. It is not a joke. It seems to be a question of hush-hush policy about military affairs. We are supposed to be quiet and say nothing. It seems that by these means we will overcome the enemy who has no occasion to use hush-hush tactics and speaks very forcibly. He says how many men he will put into the field, and how many aeroplanes he will use. We do not do that. The enemy knows more about Australia than does any man in this Chamber.

Mr. Thorn: They might wake up to our inefficiency.

Mr. TRIAT: Let us wake our people up to the position. We will never be able to beat the enemy until we do something. The Leader of the Opposition suggests we should arm the men with rifles. As it happens we cannot arm them with rifles. But why give men rifles when modern weapons are being used? Why not arm them with machine guns and sub-machine guns? The enemy does not take a rifle; he takes a tommy-gun and cleans up our men. He does not have a piece of steel called a bayonet stuck on the end of a stick; he fights from a distance with such weapons as trench mortars, tommy-guns, tanks, Bren gun carriers, and has beaten the best men we can put in the field. Yet we have the audacity to sit here and say we are well protected and able to meet them.

The suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition, to arm the men, is a wise one. But why suggest a rifle? They might as well be armed with shanghais. The military have impressed 1904 rifles with which to equip men to meet an up-to-date and well-armed enemy. The position is disgraceful. It is, however, one in which we have driven ourselves, and if we will not assist ourselves we must be prepared to take the consequences. This morning's paper reports that China is our wonderful ally, but that she relies solely on England and America for armament supplies. The British must not retreat; we should not retreat without fighting. The position today is that we are not

prepared, anywhere, to meet the enemy on fair and reasonable grounds. We give ground without loss of men.

Mr. North: Whom do you blame?

Mr. TRIAT: The military heads; the nincompoops who told us that Singapore was impregnable. General Blamey told us they could not take Singapore. I say that man is not capable. He told us that Singapore was impregnable and it did not last 24 hours.

Mr. Doney: You admit you know nothing about it.

Mr. TRIAT: The time is long overdue for these men to be put out of their jobs and replaced by men who can properly fill the positions.

Mr. Marshall: Get rid of the old men!

Mr. TRIAT: Young fellows should be placed in these positions and not old men like us.

Mr. Wilson: Speak for yourself!

Mr. TRIAT: I feel deeply about this matter. This is my country. If we do nothing to protect it the other chap will take it, and we will have nothing to do with growing our wheat or selling our vegetables. It is nice to have foreign people coming here in a friendly way. At one time I had the impression that women had no right to be in Parliament or to sit on juries, but I am lately altering all my opinions. They could probably have done a lot better than we have. We have done nothing. I judge people by results.

Mr. Abbott: The women could drive trams.

Mr. TRIAT: In every part of the British Empire the results of the war have been bad. We have sustained nothing but reverses and wonderful retreats and evacuations. Let us in this State of ours do everything to assist in the manufacture of munitions, and everything else that goes towards making the war a success from our point of view.

Ministers have told us that they are extremely busy and have not much time. That is so. Members of Parliament, however, have not been so terribly busy. I contacted a number during the recess period whose services could be made available.

The Premier: Have they not any initiative?

Mr. TRIAT: They have a certain amount, but what can a member of Parliament do politically if he does not get a lead from

those who know what is being done? Take the question of emergency food supplies! That was a wonderfully good scheme, but many members did not have much knowledge of it. The Opposition suggested that there are no supplies on hand to fill the orders coming in. The fault is with the storekeepers in the back country who did not make application in good time. Had members of Parliament been given instructions to provide for emergency food supplies to be put into their districts, there would have been no trouble.

Mr. Berry: We were told that food supplies were here.

Mr. TRIAT: They have the food, but not sufficient to last a fortnight if anything went wrong.

Mr. J. H. Smith: That would affect finance.

Mr. TRIAT: Floods have caused shortages in one district. They have been experienced in Mt. Magnet, Leonora and also at an isolated place like Agnew.

The Minister for Labour: It mostly concerns perishable foods.

Mr. TRIAT: There was a shortage of bacon, butter and such commodities. There should be no such shortages. If plenty of food is available it should be taken to the outback places. The Minister for Lands told us yesterday that to bring wheat supplies to the metropolitan area is wrong; that more wheat should go into the back country. Why does he not say that it is going next week? Our rolling stock is being well and truly used now, and we will not have many more chances to take wheat into the back country if the traffic of troops on the Eastern Goldfields line continues. Wheat stored in the back country would be a good standby, and even if it were never used there would not be much loss.

This State cannot do a great amount in regard to the war effort until it gets its own iron and steel. We have plenty of iron. There is no question of a shortage of ore, but of pig iron. Other countries with very little coal have been successful in smelting iron ore. It can be done with charcoal. The question of charcoal arises also in connection with gas producers. An enormous tonnage of timber has been burnt in this State in the timber areas and where land has been cleared, but not one at-

tempt has been made to experiment with charcoal iron ore. Now, in time of war, when we find charcoal iron a wonderful asset, we have no knowledge of it. We are told that people have been induced to go into this question, but that may be in the distant future. The Government responsible should make the experiment to see whether we can fabricate iron.

The Premier: You know that it has been done.

Mr. TRIAT: Have we made charcoal iron?

The Premier: No, but the experiments you talk about have been made.

Mr. TRIAT: I do not think lewt. of charcoal iron has been made in this State, yet we have wonderful deposits of iron ore. Our enemy would dearly have liked to have had Yampi Sound ore made available to him. We have also other deposits close to the South-West and no attempt has been made to use them.

The Premier: Yes, there have!

Mr. TRIAT: Well, they have been unsuccessful. Has lewt. of iron ore been turned out? No. Has that much been taken away from Western Australia? No. No genuine attempts have been made to fabricate iron ore in Western Australia.

The Premier: During the last couple of years a tremendous amount of research work has been done.

Mr. Marshall: It is not long since the railway to the manganese deposits was pulled up.

Mr. TRIAT: We have tantalite which, as an alloy, produces one of the highest grade steels possible; we also have scheelite, wolfram and manganese, and we are supposed to have deposits of the best grade of iron ore.

Mr. North: Other people use our tantalite.

Mr. TRIAT: Yes. It goes away from the State. One member said, "Let it all go away and be made up somewhere else." That is a rotten outlook for a public man in a country such as this. It should all be made here. People should be sent from other parts of the Commonwealth to do the work here. I am not going to waste any more time on this matter; no one seems to take much notice of it.

The Premier: For the first time we have a department to deal with these things.

That department was established against, in many instances, the hostile criticism of this House.

Mr. TRIAT: I hope the Premier makes a success of the department. It is, at times, only by violent criticism that we can get anywhere. I am not hostile about these things; I feel aggrieved.

I wish now to deal with the question of gas-producers. According to the Press it will be compulsory, pretty well, for everybody to fit gas-producers. Some two years ago when there was a likelihood of petrol shortage I suggested the manufacture of gas-producers by the State. I said then that people in the back country would be penalised by having to pay terrific prices for them. The State Government has all the facilities to manufacture gas-producers and could do it at a reasonable price. They could be made available at a cost not to exceed £20 or £25. That was not done. Indeed it was not attempted! What is the position to-day? If I want a gas-producer I have to pay £60 or £80 for it, and if I want it mounted on a trailer I have to pay £130 for it.

Mr. Hughes: If you want terms you pay 12, 15 or 20 per cent.

Mr. TRIAT: Why did not the Government take action in the matter? The Government should have been the first to put a gas-producer on the market so that the needs of our people might be met and to ensure that they would not be exploited. What wonderful money some manufacturers are making on the sale of gas-producers! A man in my electorate made a gas-producer for a three-quarter ton truck engaged in transporting produce over a distance of 140 miles twice every week, and it cost him £2 17s. to fabricate and fit to the truck.

Mr. Marshall: He would not be allowed, under the regulations, to use it.

Mr. TRIAT: He is using it every day of the week. That gas-producer cost less than £3 to make and fit to the truck.

The Premier: What did he charge for making it?

Mr. TRIAT: Nothing at all; he made it himself.

The Premier: His time represented some cost.

Mr. TRIAT: I have said that the cost of fabricating and fitting it was under £3.

The Premier: But it might have cost £50 for his own labour.

Mr. TRIAT: Not at all. I say without fear of contradiction that a gas-producer can be marketed at a price of £20 or £25. It is scandalous that people should be permitted to charge the present prices. In the early stages gas-producers could be bought for £30, and in Kalgoorlie private people are prepared to supply them at a cost of £25 to £30.

Mr. North: Do you claim that there is a monopoly?

Mr. TRIAT: I claim that there is an agreement amongst manufacturers not to bring the price down.

Mr. Thorn: Of course there is an agreement.

Mr. TRIAT: A gas-producer is not worth £60, but people are compelled to pay that and more for them. I hope it is not too late even now for the Government to make an attempt to market a gas-producer at a reasonable price. People in the back country cannot get petrol and they must have some form of power. I cannot fit one on my car because I cannot afford to spend a hundred pounds on it.

The references by the Minister for Labour to the alunite deposit at Lake Campion were very interesting. Before he made his speech I had given notice of a question, which was duly answered, but the chances are that had I known the Minister intended to deal with the subject, I would not have asked the question. Some time ago I interested myself in the alunite deposit at Lake Campion, and was very anxious to see it worked. I had no knowledge of the material, but I had read the report of Mr. Dodds, issued some years before. He pointed out that at Lake Campion, to a depth of 20ft. there were 15,000,000 tons of alunite containing over 40 per cent. of aluminium and a high percentage of potash. The potash content is shown to be $1\frac{3}{4}$ million tons. Before the war potash was worth £12 a ton, but the price has risen to £23 15s., and I am given to understand that, even at that price, it is not procurable. If $1\frac{3}{4}$ million tons of potash are available at Lake Campion, it is certainly a wonderful and very valuable deposit. Last October I made a statement in this House to the effect that the Government should not have handed over this deposit to private enterprise.

The Premier: Would you give a goldmining lease to anybody who wanted it?

Mr. TRIAT: If there was only one goldmining lease in the State, it should not be given to a private individual.

The Premier: Do you think the State should enter into the business of goldmining?

Mr. TRIAT: If there was only one gold mine in the State, it certainly should do so. This deposit is far too valuable and much too important to the State to be given to any private concern.

The Premier: We can all be wise after the event.

Mr. TRIAT: There was an opportunity to be wise before the event. We have £50,000,000 worth of potash in that deposit.

The Premier: Who said that?

Mr. TRIAT: Everyone who has read the report knows it. I knew it 12 years ago.

The Premier: But do you realise that it might cost twice as much to get it out?

Mr. TRIAT: We have a scientific committee operating in this State, and if its members are not able to tell us what the cost of getting out the potash would be, they should be out of the job.

The Premier: Why not give the Minister credit for establishing the industry?

Mr. TRIAT: I give him all possible credit for it.

The Premier: No one has done so before.

Mr. TRIAT: But I am not going to give credit to anyone who was responsible for handing over a property of such enormous value to one party of individuals, no matter who they are. They are not entitled to it.

The Minister for Labour: That can be overcome.

Mr. TRIAT: The Minister for Mines said the lease was owned by H. B. Jackson.

The Premier: It is in the name of H. B. Jackson.

Mr. TRIAT: If the lease belongs to H. B. Jackson and the State is going to work it, the lease should be transferred to the State immediately.

The Premier: There is an agreement in course of preparation, with that object in view.

Mr. TRIAT: Why should that be necessary?

The Premier: It is the same as with the goldmining people.

Mr. TRIAT: H. B. Jackson and others connected with the lease are entitled to be recompensed for their experiments and any work they have done.

The Minister for Labour: Your ideas are ours. We have been experimenting on that basis.

Mr. TRIAT: But I understood from the Minister that at the end of the war, or 12 months thereafter, the lease was to be handed back to the syndicate.

The Premier: If a prospector found a good mine, would you agree to the State's taking it over from him?

Mr. TRIAT: Many good mines have been found by prospectors, but this is the only alunite deposit I know of in Australia, and it contains £50,000,000 worth of potash.

Mr. Warner: Do not you think Jackson should receive compensation?

Mr. J. H. Smith: There is a second deposit close to it.

Mr. TRIAT: I have not read of any other deposit that contains such a large quantity. I strongly oppose any action that would prevent the deposit being worked by the State or Commonwealth. It should not be worked by private individuals.

Mr. Warner: The State would have known nothing about it but for Jackson.

Mr. TRIAT: The State knew about it long ago. Members on the hon. member's side knew about it long before Jackson did.

Mr. Abbott: But they did not trouble to investigate it.

Mr. TRIAT: Perhaps they did not have the means to investigate it. There was a suggestion that the Commonwealth Government should assist the State to open up the deposit by contributing £90,000.

The Premier: And the Commonwealth did not do so.

Several members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: I ask the member for Mt. Magnet to take no notice of interjections.

Mr. TRIAT: We are now given to understand that the alunite deposit will probably be transferred to the State and compensation paid to the people who held the lease. That being so, I am satisfied.

Mr. Styants: That is not the impression the Minister gave the House the other day.

Mr. TRIAT: Certainly it is not. I am interested in the matter of dealing with evacuees. We have been informed that people have been evacuated from target areas. While I admit that the line of demarcation must fall somewhere—

Mr. Hughes: This must be a target area.

Mr. TRIAT: I think it would be.

The Minister for Labour: This front bench is, anyhow!

Mr. Hughes: It ought to be evacuated.

Mr. TRIAT: While I admit that the line of demarcation must fall somewhere, we find that people have been evacuated from one side of a street to the other. Surely that is entirely wrong. If people are to be evacuated from a target area, why should they be sent from one part of the metropolitan area to another? If evacuation is necessary, why not move them right out? We have a lot of country areas suitable for receiving evacuees. The Minister mentioned some of them—on the Great Southern and in the South-West—and said they were the only safe areas. Two months ago they might have been, but I doubt whether they are now. Youanmi is a safe area now, though it was not two months ago. Youanmi has a plentiful water supply, electric light, stores of provisions, and housing accommodation for a thousand people.

Mr. Marshall: Also a hospital and a school.

Mr. TRIAT: Yes, and a railway line within 40 miles of it. I interviewed the officer in charge of evacuation and mentioned Youanmi, and he replied, "I know all about it."

Member: There is no pub at Youanmi.

Mr. TRIAT: Yes, there is. Every facility is available for a thousand people. Women and children to that number could be sent there, and would find ample accommodation and opportunities for recreation. Youanmi has a golf course, a swimming pool and a picture show. But no, such a place is not considered. It is the South-West that is to receive the evacuees, and the South-West is short of water.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Not the South-West, the Great Southern.

Mr. TRIAT: There are plenty of places in the outback country to which people could be evacuated. Old ladies and children should certainly be sent right out there. They should be moved while there is yet time. Anyone who has read the accounts of invasions knows how roads have been congested by old people, women and children, refugees of all kinds, and have proved not only a detriment to our military forces, but also a target for the enemy, who has not hesitated to use machine guns on them. I am afraid that the Japs will invade this State, so why not send those people into the back country? Let them be dispersed now so that there will be no worry about old people and children, though I do not say

that all children should be evacuated. There are many places in this State to which people could be safely sent. Youanmi has a permanent water supply only 60 feet underground. Vegetables could be grown, and there would be nothing to worry about unless the enemy reached that part, in which event it would be the end of everything.

Let me now refer to the pegging of prices. We have had complaints about the Arbitration Court. I strongly favour arbitration, though the court might make mistakes, but if it is going to peg wages definitely, the cost of living should also be pegged. We hear much about the work of the Prices Commissioner, but I contend that this is a weakness in the administration. When I wanted short lengths of firewood for a cooking stove, I used to pay 27s. 6d. for a ton lot. On three occasions lately I have tried to buy a ton lot and have been refused. People in the business offer to supply an ordinary load, which is less than half a ton, for 15s. They could have supplied a ton, but they make a bigger profit by selling the firewood in small loads for 15s. I am given to understand that some of them deliver considerably less than half a ton and charge rates ranging up to 37s. 6d. per ton. That is quite wrong.

Sitting suspended from 1.0 to 2.15 p.m.

Mr. TRIAT: Some reference has been made to the goldmining industry; and, as a member representing a goldmining electorate, the matter is to me all-important. Unfortunately, the meetings that have been arranged for goldfields members to go into the matter have not yet been completed. It is my desire, however, to offer a few remarks on the industry as I view it. If the suggested manpowering of the miners is put into operation, our mines will be so depleted of workers as to make the position of the industry untenable. In my opinion, there is not a more loyal body of men in Australia than the workers on our goldfields. Enlistments from the mines have been exceedingly heavy. From the first day war was declared, men earning £40 per fortnight on the mines offered their services to the country. To them it was not a question of money nor a question of depression in the industry; it was loyalty on their part. Their desire was to take their part in the defence of Australia.

At the present time, however, we find their loyalty is being stretched a little too far. I do not know the attitude of the Commonwealth Government or the American Government towards this industry; but, speaking as a goldfields member, I say it is all-important to Western Australia, and I, for one, will strongly oppose any movement that will result in closing down our mines. I understand the Commonwealth Government requires the services of 60,000 men for certain purposes. In order to get them, the suggestion is made that our mines should be closed down to enable the miners to be manpowered for that work. That is wrong. Let us see what the goldmining industry means to the State. The number of workers engaged in it does not exceed more than a little over 8,000; but many of them are working on the surface. They are old men who have been in the service of the mines for many years and are not capable now of doing the harder work. In addition, other of our miners are in some stage of miner's phthisis; some, unfortunately, are reaching the silicotic stage. These will be unable to perform hard work. If these men be taken into account, members will see that there will not be such a great number left to manpower.

Another position arises. Storekeepers and other business men have sunk their capital in the goldfields. If the miners are manpowered, these business people will become bankrupt. But there is another critical factor. The miner himself has married and is raising a family. He has probably saved a little money, bought a cottage in which to live and has furnished it reasonably. He has also probably purchased a Kelvinator, which is essential on the goldfields, and also a wireless. Those of them who can afford it have bought a motor car. Most of these things have, however, been purchased on time payment. If such men are called up, they will have to make a great sacrifice, as their savings will be dissipated, with the result that they too will become bankrupt.

I do not believe, however, that the suggestion is to close down the goldmining industry; but, if it is, we should oppose it by all means in our power. Goldmining has been carried on in this State for 50 years. During that period it has, on more than one occasion, been the salvation of the State. It pulled us through the depression. It is the only industry of any consequence in

the State, as 40 per cent. of our revenue comes from it. If it were proposed to close down such an industry in Victoria or New South Wales, what would be the position there? The Government that proposed it would not be tolerated for five minutes. Western Australia, however, is the Cinderella of the States and therefore is not considered by the other States to be of any consequence, so that the matter of closing down the mines is not an important one to them. I am sure that members on both sides of the House will fight against any such proposal.

Hon. C. G. Latham: We cannot afford to be without the industry.

Mr. TRIAT: I know we cannot and I know members opposite will support our case for its defence. I question whether, if the miners were manpowered to make up the 60,000 men required by the Commonwealth, more than 500 would be available. Probably a few young men would be left and some of them have probably to keep their mothers.

Mr. Marshall: All the young men cannot enlist, either.

Mr. TRIAT: That is so. It would be very foolish to permit the people of the Eastern States to sabotage our goldfields by closing down the mines, while other industries are left untouched. I shall mention one, the brewing industry. Is it suggested that the breweries should be closed down so that their employees may be manpowered?

Member: Their output was reduced by one-third.

Mr. TRIAT: If that were so, we would immediately have a great upheaval. Do not touch the breweries! But the goldmining industry of our State is quite another matter; the unfortunate position seems to be that East is East and West is West. I repeat, I do not believe it was ever intended to close the industry down. If the men are essential to the defence of the country, they will willingly sacrifice their homes; but to manpower them would not win the war. However, I can leave this matter till a later stage. I hope this House will, at the right time, take notice of my remarks. I did not prepare my speech and I apologise to "Hansard," because I am told I am too fast, that I talk like a machine gun. I cannot help that. I hope we shall not have any more Malayas, Singapores or

Cretes. Let us give our fighting men the necessary equipment. Do not send our air-men up in Wirraways to fight the Japanese Zeros! Put our men in Zeros and oppose them to the Japanese, and we shall have a very different story. Our men are as capable as are the fighters of any other nation.

MR. CROSS (Canning) [2.24]: Some mention has been made by previous speakers of what private members should do now that the Commonwealth is engaged in war and possibly facing invasion. In my opinion, one of the first duties of a private member is to assist in bolstering up the morale of the people in his constituency. In wartime it is often necessary for Governments to govern by regulation, but regulations should be bolstered up by commonsense. I am not so sure that in all the regulations that have been promulgated commonsense has been exercised. One of the worst things we have had inflicted upon us, and prematurely, too, is what is known as the black-out or brown-out. It has depressed people and done more to demoralise them than anything else I know of. The brown-out was imposed far too soon. The best way to prevent an invasion is to be prepared for it. It was necessary to make lengthy plans to prepare for civil defence, and accordingly a council was set up some two or three years ago. That council has been busy making preparations. It has ordered the removal of plate glass within the city area, and that has now almost entirely disappeared. It was proved in the countries that have been bombed that glass was most dangerous.

I am one of the few people who for a long time have made a study of this position and I say that bombing raids on this city are not likely to take place in the near future, the reason being that it is literally impossible for the enemy to raid us.

Mr. North: Did you mention bombing raids?

Mr. CROSS: Yes.

Mr. Mann: Do not talk such silly rot.

Mr. CROSS: Before I finish my argument I will convince my humble friend that he will have a hard job to knock it down. Unquestionably, success in war frequently depends on geographical position. We are fortunate in this respect because we are situated a fairly long distance from

the sphere of activities. If my friend will look at the map and take the trouble to make some measurements, he will immediately wake up to the very pointed fact, which cannot be ignored, that up to the fall of France the Japanese had started to penetrate Indo-China and Siam.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Why does not Mr. Curtin send for you?

Mr. CROSS: The Japanese established a base at Saigon. If the hon. member will look at the map, as I said, and will make some measurements, he will find that all the places to which the Japanese have gone are within range of their own bombers from their own home base. They are not more than 620 miles from that base. As soon as they go outside that range they begin to strike trouble. The farther they get from their base, the greater their difficulty will be. Their nearest base to Perth is 2,450 miles away. When I said it was impossible for them to bomb Perth at the present time, I also said I would prove it. The Japanese have not got one bomber with a range of 2,500 miles.

Mr. Berry: What about Pearl Harbour?

Mr. CROSS: Pearl Harbour is nearly at the back door of Japan. It is impossible for the Japs to come to Perth, bomb it and return to their base until they can establish a base in Australia and they have not done that yet. It has been said that they could send an aircraft carrier. If they were stupid enough to do that they would never get back with it. If an aircraft carrier were sent from Japan it would have to travel over 6,000 miles and be re-fuelled and provisioned twice before it got here.

Mr. Needham: General MacArthur will have to resign the supreme command!

Mr. CROSS: I began by speaking about the blackout and the brownout and by saying how foolish they were. Even if an aircraft carrier did succeed in passing over the Indian Ocean, the Japs. would never attempt to bomb Perth at night, for the simple reason that the planes could not land on the aircraft carrier in the darkness because of the rise and fall of the boat. On the "Ark Royal," one of the largest aircraft carriers in the world, it was between 8ft. and 10ft. in calm water and on the smaller Japanese aircraft carriers it is greater.

Mr. Mann: Where do you get your information?

Mr. CROSS: Never mind where I get it!

Mr. Marshall: He is the man who has studied it!

Mr. CROSS: For the reason I have given, there is no probability of a night attack on Perth either now or for some time to come.

Mr. Stubbs: If that is true you should be pensioned off for life on a million pounds!

Mr. CROSS: It is true. This is not a new statement I am making; I made it at the council members' room on the 6th November, 1939. On that occasion I made a forecast which is coming true quicker than most people think. This war will probably go down in history as the war for oil. Two years last November I said that this war would be decisively fought out in the Middle East and it will be within the next few months.

Mr. Mann: I wish I had your confidence.

Mr. CROSS: Never mind about my confidence. I have heard members opposite and on this side of the House clamour for more rifles. If they had studied the position they would have known that continental armies and even the Japanese have been discarding rifles for years. In 1936 the Germans increased their fire power tenfold. They have reduced their divisions from 19,000 to below 15,000 and increased their fire power ten times. That is done by discarding rifles and building up full battalions of machine gunners and equipping their troops with mortars, anti-aircraft guns and anti-tank guns. I will find out what my friends opposite have been reading concerning what has happened since the war began! The enemy has done something else and, if we do not take careful notice of it, we shall not be in the race in the event of an invasion.

If members opposite have been reading about this war they will know that in France the French fought a battle of contact retreat. They never fought between the towns. They fought on the main roads of France. They never entered a field and they played right into the Germans' hands. The method the Germans adopted was to push right into them with tanks, followed by infantry. They had already been covered by Stuka bombers, which are pretty effective but which did not do the most damage. The Germans had a new weapon. I have never heard it mentioned or seen it

referred to in the Press or anywhere else, except in books written by American correspondents who saw the gear at work. If the infantry got into bother the Germans sent a wireless message back a few miles and immediately there were sent up columns of six-inch guns on rubber tyres and travelling at 40 and 50 miles an hour.

I was speaking of this to one of our local military men and he said, "They could not stand the repercussion of a six-inch gun; it would take a week to dry the concrete foundations." But that is ridiculous. The Germans overcame that difficulty long ago. They got their six-inch guns to the front line travelling at the rate of 40 or 50 miles an hour and the guns were dug in and ready for action in 14 or 15 minutes. If we have not some of that equipment and they get here, we will not be able to stand up to them. That is why our fellows could not stand up to the enemy in Malaya.

Mr. Mann: But you said they would not come here!

Mr. CROSS: I do not think they will.

Mr. Marshall: He only said "if" they come.

Mr. CROSS: I say that in the improbable event of their coming here we will not be able to face them unless we have that equipment. However, I consider that before they get as far as Australia they will have met their Waterloo. I still think the Japanese are not our worst enemies, but the Germans. If they fail to get that oilfield they are after in the Middle East I venture the opinion that long before most people anticipate, the war will be finished, because unless they are able to get lubricating oil—and all world authorities agree they must have come to the end of their tether—they will be finished.

There will not be any temporising in this war. It will be a knock-out blow and they will get it. The day their tanks and planes cannot operate they will be finished. Having regard to the geographical position, I do not consider that a black-out is required immediately, and it is not a fair proposition that people should be compelled to live in semi-darkness and under conditions in which many people will be killed and many depressed; and the morale of the people will be destroyed quicker than by any other means. It is unfair to impose a continuous black-out long before it is needed. Now that

all preparations have been made, subdued lighting, at all events, should be allowed. The only kind of shells that are likely to fall on our shores will come from submarines which could creep along the coast under water. But they do not carry big guns—the biggest is three inches—and could not do much damage.

If it has not already been done, there should be some organisation of the production of vegetables and perishable goods for the people of this State. In the district of the member for Middle Swan (Mr. J. Hegney) and of the member for Toodyay (Mr. Thorn) large areas of land are under vines. For many years that land has been fertilised, and it would not be very much trouble to sow a considerable quantity of vegetables between the rows of vines. The land is already cultivated and has been fertilised and a fair amount of work could be done in that area with good results.

Mr. Thorn: What do you think the vines would be doing?

Mr. CROSS: It would not affect them. The vegetables would be taken off before the vines produced next season. If peas were grown between the rows and, after they had been harvested, the green stuff were ploughed in, the ground would be further fertilised. In England peas were grown and when they reached the flowering stage were ploughed in, in order to fertilise the soil.

Mr. Thorn: We have been doing that for years.

Mr. CROSS: There are large tracts of land in some of the gullies in the Pickering Brook area several acres in extent in some instances, and I think they could be exploited. People in that area growl about not being able to get a living; they say they cannot grow wheat because they cannot sell it, yet they have patches of first-class land highly suitable for vegetables.

Mr. Mann: For the rabbits to eat!

Mr. CROSS: There are no more rabbits there than there are in the Great Southern and the South-West, and there are fairly big patches of land down there that could be used for the intense cultivation of vegetables. When one goes around this country and sees the large areas of good land which are available and on which little or nothing has been done, one feels that we do not deserve to hold it unless we can do more with it.

Mr. Thorn: You have some of it in South Perth.

Mr. CROSS: Yes, we could grow things in South Perth. In my district an intensive effort is going to be made to increase the production of vegetables. The people in the Riverton area have been asking for an electricity supply for several years and it has been promised. I hope it will be provided, because the people require electric current to irrigate some of their land. It is not intended to irrigate some of the land from the river because there are fairly large quantities of water in the coffee rock only a few feet below the ground. If electricity supplies are available the people can irrigate the land and grow more than they are growing at the present time.

I was pleased to hear the Minister say the other day that efforts were being made to establish an egg-drying plant. I hope the Minister for Agriculture will take up with the Federal Government the question of making some cheap wheat available to the poultry farmers. I understand that cheap wheat is being supplied to some sections of primary producers and some should be provided for the struggling poultry men. With the increase of population due to foreign visitors and evacuees, there will be very few eggs to spare and the margin for producing eggs at present is a small one.

Mr. Wilson: Some must be kept for elections.

Mr. CROSS: We have a Price Fixing Commissioner, but I am sometimes puzzled to know upon what basis the prices are fixed and I wonder whether there are not certain businesses, particularly in the city, that are ignoring the Price Fixing Commissioner. My attention was drawn to a notice inserted in this morning's "West Australian" by a city firm. I shall not mention the name of that firm by way of a free advertisement, but if members like to peruse the "West Australian" they will find that the firm offered a parcel of drapery for which the price was £7 Gs., on extended terms. The parcel included two pairs of sheets, four pairs of pillow slips, and four pairs of blankets. When one examines the proposition one finds that the price offered in the advertisement represented about twice that which would be paid if the articles were bought for cash. If one visits the various shops and notices present-day prices, one will recognise that during the last 18 months or two years

prices for many such articles have been advanced by 100 per cent. Some of the articles of clothing are made up of materials that have not been imported at all during the past two years.

Mr. Sampson: Are you an expert in sheets?

Mr. CROSS: I do not know that I am, but a man would require only a very small grain of commonsense to be able to recognise the enormous extent to which prices have been increased for articles made of silk or cotton, which have not been imported for a very long period. That indicates that the business-people have increased the prices of stocks in hand. With regard to paper, I recently inspected a store at Fremantle where I am sure there was sufficient paper for news-print purposes for the next three years.

Mr. Patrick: We are lucky to have it.

Mr. CROSS: That is so, but some of that paper is of a quality that would make it useful for other purposes. Certainly if the hon. member desired to buy any of that paper he would not obtain it at pre-war prices but would have to pay an inflated figure. That just serves to indicate what is going on at present.

Mr. Sampson: Paper prices are fixed, as are those of other lines.

Mr. CROSS: To follow up the remarks of the member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith), I desire to refer to an action taken recently by the Arbitration Court and subsequently confirmed by the Supreme Court. When an application was made for the fixation of the basic wage, the Arbitration Court, in its wisdom or otherwise, saw fit not to adopt the usual method by which wages increase with any rise in the cost of living. In the past an increase in living costs has been almost invariably followed by the Arbitration Court automatically granting an increase in wages. On this occasion the President of the Court said that in order to stop the process of inflation he would not agree to an increase in wages. It does not matter what the President of the Arbitration Court does—

Mr. Thorn: Not at all!

Mr. CROSS: —or what the Supreme Court may do; they cannot prevent the rising cost of living.

Mr. Doney: Nor yet the rising of the sun!

Mr. CROSS: Inflation must inevitably take place due to the increased costs brought about by the war. It will be im-

possible for workers to revert to pre-war rates of pay, and at the same time to continue paying the increased taxation occasioned by the war. I do not intend to say much more about that although I could enlarge upon it to a considerable extent. The action of the court was unfair to both worker and employer, particularly seeing that it did not take into consideration the increased cost of every requirement necessary in the daily lives of the workers. I think the action taken was wrong. In fairness to both workers and employers the Arbitration Act should be amended to prevent the court from adopting such an attitude in future.

Mr. J. H. Smith: There is no need for an amendment to the Act.

Mr. CROSS: Another matter to which I desire to refer has relation to the liquor laws. In dealing with this matter much commonsense is called for. I refer particularly to the changing of conditions that are to apply to the liquor trade. With a great deal of truth, much has been said about the excessive drinking and the disgraceful scenes witnessed in the metropolitan area during the last few months. I agree with a previous speaker—I think it was the member for Pingelly (Mr. Seward)—who said that the conditions that obtained were due to the fact that the military authorities had not properly carried out their job. Scenes were witnessed during the 1914-18 war, but nothing like to the extent of those of recent date. This time the military authorities have absolutely shelved their authority. Whenever a convoy was in port, no evidence of military efforts to cope with the situation was apparent—apart from the Americans, who did not hesitate to deal with their own men when they were a bit over the odds. Our own military people, when the friendly General Plant was at the head, did nothing in that regard. Some people endeavoured to blame the Government and the police for what happened, but really the trouble was caused by the absolute neglect of the military authorities.

Mr. Withers: By the lack of discipline.

Mr. CROSS: Quite so. I am glad to note that steps have now been taken to have pickets patrolling the streets so as to preserve order among the soldiers. War has always brought with it an increase in night-life, drinking, dancing and all the side issues connected with the mental attitude

dominated by the contemplation of the formula: "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." I have been informed that complaints regarding excessive drinking here are mild to what they have been in Sydney, where the position has been very much worse. A temperance man informed me that the drunken orgies in Sydney and the night drinking parties there constituted a positive scandal, much worse than anything ever seen in Perth. In Sydney 6 o'clock closing applies to the hotels! The gentleman I refer to did not know what happened in Melbourne because he merely passed though by train. I myself believe in looking round and seeing what other people are doing in similar circumstances with a view to ascertaining if we have something to learn. Our friend Hitler—

Mr. Thorn: Is he your friend?

Mr. CROSS: —dealt with this problem. The most important institution in Nationalist Socialist Germany is the beer hall. Hitler would never have obtained power had it not been for the assistance in Munich of the mass-production, beer-guzzling beer halls. He would never have become Fuehrer of the Third Reich had it not been for the drink halls of Munich, and he would not have been able to retain his power as the dictator of an oppressed country if he had even attempted to check the tremendous flow of beer and wine in the taverns of that city. The beer halls are indeed dear to the German's heart. Hitler has done many evil things. He has burnt down synagogues and churches; he has abolished the confessional; he has torn down whole blocks of apartment houses; statues have been destroyed; he has wiped out historical landmarks—but he has been most careful not to tamper with the beer halls. Hitler did something else. Late in 1930, and early in the progress of the present war, he issued a proclamation that the strength of beers and wines had to be reduced by 40 per cent. There the military dealt with military offenders, and the truth is that in Germany today there is no trouble at all in this respect.

Mr. Watts: They have only 4 per cent. beer now.

Mr. CROSS: It would be better if we had that type of beer here than to endeavour to carry out the stupid proposals that are before us at present. The only reform necessary is one dictated by commonsense, and I can see no commonsense in an attempt

to restrict the hours of trading for hotels to seven per day throughout the whole State, irrespective of considerations of climate and other essentials. Such a proposal is ridiculous.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: You are playing into Hitler's hands.

Mr. CROSS: Is that so?

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: You just indicated what he has done.

Mr. CROSS: The hon. member must realise that in these times of depressing black-outs and the abolition of almost all amusements, people desire some form of recreation.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: Hitler did not give it to them.

Mr. CROSS: He provided them with another form of recreation and the hon. member can inquire for herself as to what it was. I was about to illustrate my meaning. Consider the position of a township like Southern Cross! People from centres like Evanston, 124 miles distant, Yellowdine, 28 miles away, Palmer's Find, 40 miles away, from Marvel Loch, and so on, all go to Southern Cross for stores and other requirements. I do not care how the seven hours of trading may be spread; it will be impossible to meet the requirements of all those people, even though the hours should be from 12 to 7 p.m. or from 2 to 9 p.m. They might come in during the morning. How stupid, in a country like this, to refuse such men refreshment! Now, as regards Southern Cross, I have heard numbers of people complain that not only were they unable to get a drink there, but that at night there was nowhere to go except the dark streets while waiting for trains. Even in the waiting-room at the railway station there are no lights. The station is in darkness until a few minutes before the train arrives.

Mr. Raphael: You are speaking of Sundays?

Mr. CROSS: Yes. On Sunday evening one cannot even get a cup of tea in a restaurant. The restaurants, too, are closed then. Just because a small section of Perth people have abused their rights and privileges, there is a proposal to close Perth hotels and thus prevent people who have worked hard all day from getting a drink in the evening. I believe in moderation. I have always been a moderate person. I hold that the only

successful control of the liquor trade lies in reducing the strength of spirits and beer, so that a man, if he wishes, may be able to drink all night without getting drunk.

At a meeting of Labour members it was agreed that if hotel hours were to be reduced to seven, hotels should be open from midday till 7 p.m. My personal opinion is that hotels should remain open for nine hours per day, and that people who get drunk should be dealt with, and the same as regards young people who go into hotels. If temperance reformers want real reform, they must go about the matter in a decent manner. I believe that hotels could be shut at 6 p.m. or even 7 p.m. without any other result than that drinking would be driven underground. Some persons contend that if hotels were closed at 6 or 7 in the evening, it would not be possible to get liquor. I ask, what was the result of prohibition in America? The situation became so ridiculous that prohibition had to be abandoned. The member for Toodyay (Mr. Thorn) can testify that men go around Perth suburbs telling the women, "We can supply you with good wine."

Hon. W. D. Johnson: From Toodyay?

Mr. CROSS: From that electorate. People do not know anything about standards relating to wine.

Member: Then ignorance is bliss sometimes!

Mr. CROSS: It is said that the police should control sly-grogging, but it is well known that on any Sunday bottles of murderous liquor can be purchased in Weld Square. I have never tried the stuff. Unless reasonable and fair methods are adopted and used with commonsense, the only result of temperance reform will be a lot of sly-groggers and foreigners supplying cheap, dirty wines, which are far worse than liquor that has to stand close examination. I hold that we should be temperate in all things. The other side must be considered. Now, however, I have some good news for members who may feel depressed. The following telegram has been received:—

Melbourne, Thursday.—Operating from a secret island base 13 American flying fortresses and Liberator bombers dealt smashing blows at Japanese bases in the Philippine Islands, 2,000 miles from Australia, on Monday and Tuesday.

They sank and damaged Japanese transports, destroyed aircraft, wrecked airfields and blew up docks in three islands, Luzon, Cebu and Mindanao.

I appeal to the Government to be moderate in coming to a decision regarding the sale of liquor. In framing that decision they should give consideration to the case of people residing in the suburbs. Six o'clock closing will penalise workers who are moderate men and moderate drinkers. By the time a man working all day gets on a tram and reaches his own suburb, it is too late to get a drink. What happened at Midland Junction was that men on some pretext left munition works before 6 o'clock in order to obtain a drink. Six o'clock closing, in addition to penalising the workers, penalises suburban hotelkeepers.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That is not correct.

Mr. CROSS: I am told that is so. At any rate, temptation is put in their way. The whole question needs to be examined with commonsense, so that the reforms which are anticipated will be on a practical and permanent basis.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [3.9]: I am somewhat disappointed with the trend of the discussion here today. Many trivialities have been debated while we should have confined ourselves almost wholly to the problem of defending Western Australia during the next two or three months. I did hope, when I got leave from the Northern military authorities to come to this sitting, that practically the entire discussion would centre on the defence of Western Australia in particular and this whole continent in general. I do not want the limelight. There are many things I could tell members regarding equipment if we were in secret session, but I am not prepared to divulge them under present conditions. During the last year and a half I have spent approximately 11 months in camp training with the militia forces. In all earnestness I say that we are lamentably short of equipment. I believe I am right in stating that not one regiment in Western Australia has its full war establishment of equipment.

Mr. Thorn: That equipment is not issued until a regiment goes to the front.

Mr. STYANTS: I have heard that statements frequently, but I am sceptical of its correctness.

Mr. Thorn: It is correct.

Mr. STYANTS: I am sceptical as to whether the necessary equipment is here. Soldiers know what is called war estab-

ishment. That means the number of different weapons a soldier is entitled to, according to the strength of the regiment. With regard to Northam I believe I am right in saying that not one unit there is equipped fully. What is going to happen when one of those units goes into action and loses 25 per cent. of its equipment? I do not know where replacement equipment will come from, even on the limited scale operating now. I will not divulge where the equipment is to come from. Ask any soldier in camp how his equipment is, and he will tell you, Mr. Speaker. It is the same old story every time. I could reveal much concerning the shortness of equipment obtaining in the regiment at Northam; but I shall not do so, because the information might become public. My opinion is that equipment is not being made in Western Australia and is not being made in the Eastern States.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: What would you suggest?

Mr. STYANTS: An agitation should be set up. This State is extremely loyal, but there should be an agitation for securing its share of equipment. Even until a very short time ago I did not know whether there was a concrete plan for the defence of Western Australia.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: There is now.

Mr. Raphael: There has been an evacuation plan.

Mr. STYANTS: Yes, but I want to see our forces give up the idea of retirement and go on the offensive, or at least be able to defend themselves. I want anyone in Parliament or in civilian occupations who exhibits smug complacency as regards Western Australia's position to discard that complacency. We must get on with the arming of our forces. I meet with numbers of men in the Northam camp and elsewhere, and there is no doubt of their willingness to fight. Unquestionably they have the offensive spirit. They have not yet had an opportunity to show that spirit, but if they are given the opportunity I have no doubt as to what their conduct will be. It is discouraging, especially to young fellows of 19 or 20, to know that they have not the weapons they are supposed to have. It is discouraging to a man to be sent out with a single-shot rifle to fight machine guns. This continual going back to prepared positions depresses the morale of young fellows in the army. It also

depresses them if they do not receive the prescribed equipment. Once they do, however, I have no doubt as to the effect.

Mr. Hughes: There is plenty of equipment in this State.

Mr. STYANTS: Let us hope that is so. I have heard the statement so often that I am inclined to doubt it.

Mr. Hughes: I can tell you where it is.

Mr. STYANTS: Our visitors might have it, but we have not got it. Although we are supposed to have a small arms factory operating here to produce small arms ammunition, it is not yet in operation, and it will be some time before it is. The average number of live cartridges supplied to troops in the Northam camp for the purpose of making them marksmen is about five rounds a fortnight. Yet they wonder why the men do not shoot straight when they go on the range. Most of these boys had not seen a military rifle before being called up as universal service personnel. It is a mystery to me how they can make reasonably good shots out of such men by giving them five rounds a fortnight. I have been firing with a military rifle since I was about 17 years of age, and I say it is impossible to teach a man to fire accurately by taking him on to a miniature range with a .22 calibre rifle. I have seen men on the miniature range put up a particularly high score, but when they get on to the open range at 400 and 500 yards they are unable to compete with the haze and wind, and are unable to hit the target. If we have these munitions and equipment, why not let the men train with them? I hope the member for East Perth is right and that we have this equipment. We would feel much easier if we saw it and were given it for training purposes.

I have seen in the Press that Mr. Churchill and Mr. Curtin have said that we have doubled and trebled our output. That indicates nothing. If we produced 20 Bren guns per annum before the war, and that production was trebled, the extra output would not be effective. Before the war, owing to our depending on a policy of pacifism, our equipment was very small.

We have not got down to anything approaching 100 per cent. war effort. As soon as some restriction on the liberties or luxuries in the interests of the country is imposed on some portion of the community, we hear squealing from all directions. I do not wish to be a Job's comforter, but I

feel that we are only just beginning to notice the pinch, and that people will have to put up with a great deal less in the way of comfort and luxury than in the past, and they will probably have to tighten their belts before this country is out of danger. We hear a great deal from arm-chair strategists about adopting an offensive spirit, and to an extent I agree that we need to do that, but it cannot be done with broom handles.

Mr. Raphael: They break.

Mr. STYANTS: Our men are prepared to do it, and they have the necessary spirit. It is the job of the industrial and commercial interests of this country to see that these men have the proper equipment. Give them something approaching the armament of the enemy and I have no doubt as to the result. Some American airmen were in camp with us at Northam. They had lost their machines in Java, Malaya and elsewhere, but still the Japs had not got the wind up them. They told us they had lost their "erates" or "kites" but said they were prepared to go back and meet the Japs at odds of two to one and then give them a thrashing. They were not up against odds of two to one, but ten and twenty to one.

If our men at present in camp are given proper armament and equipment there will be no fear of the Japs ever getting a footing on the shores of this country. If, however, they are sent out half-equipped and inferior with regard to armaments, it might be a different story. Humanity can only stand a certain amount and whether it is distasteful to us or not there is a breaking point with the human body, and troops have to fall back before superior numbers and armaments. That has happened all along and it is our job to provide our men with proper equipment.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You cannot stand up against a mechanised force.

Mr. STYANTS: That is so. I join with the member for Mt. Magnet (Mr. Triat) in his eulogy of the services performed by the womenfolk of this State in the war effort. Many of them have left civil jobs carrying wages of £4 and £5 a week. They have entered the army on wages of about £2 15s. a week. The amount of work being performed by women's auxiliaries and associations of all kinds on a purely voluntary basis is something astonishing.

I want, briefly, to deal with the matter of black-out. I am not concerned with the bit of inconvenience caused to the people by a black-out. If the authorities consider a black-out is necessary, and that there is a probability or even a possibility of this town being bombed, then it is our job to have a black-out. There is, however, a certain amount of danger attached to it and it appears to me that transport constitutes the most dangerous element. With headlights dimmed and the city lights dimmed, transport constitutes a danger to the population. That is so particularly on the main transport routes where the omnibuses and taxis are travelling at practically the same speed as obtained before the black-out or brown-out restrictions were imposed. That is something our police force might, with benefit to the community, closely watch. I do not think the transport companies have altered their timetables; although their speeds have been reduced considerably they are still running to the same schedules.

As one who is not in the city a great deal, the black-out imposed does appear to me to be more or less of a farce. Sometimes when we get leave from Northam we hitch-hike to get a lift to Perth and arrive in the city at all hours of the night and morning. If anyone wants to test the efficacy of the black-out I would advise him to go to the top of Greenmount and have a look at Midland Junction and Perth. Lights are to be seen in all directions. In addition to that, on a summer's day the roof of the wheat silo at Bassendean constitutes one of the finest beacons that could possibly be set up for the direction of aircraft. When the sun shines on it, it can be seen for miles. The black-out conditions are something like the camouflaging of tents in the Northam camp area. There are only about 20 tents in that area and one morning orders came through that they were to be camouflaged so that they could not be seen from the air. That was done, but there are acres of corrugated iron buildings and roofs in the camp site without any pretence at camouflage.

In last week's "Sunday Times" I saw a photo taken from King's Park and lights could be seen gleaming all over the city. If there are one or two lights the whole city might as well be lit up. A bomber is taught that where there is light there is life. He will bomb where he sees light. Now that

the matter has been taken over by the Police Department, I hope the black-out conditions will be enforced more rigidly.

I desire to say something about the railway services, the overcrowding of troops and lack of accommodation. I have seen men returning to Northam camp crowded into carriages in such numbers that, if they were bullocks or sheep, the R.S.P.C.A. would not permit it. On one Sunday night the train accommodation had been completely taken up and at least 150 men were still waiting on the platform. I was one of them. We got into the compartment usually occupied by the guard, but he ordered us out. I approached the station-master and after some parleying he decided to put on another coach. One coach is not much use for 150 men. After about 25 minutes he put on three coaches. In the compartment in which I travelled as far as Chidlow's Well were 17 men. That is not fair. These men had only a limited amount of leave and were entitled to travel in some degree of comfort. In addition to that, the late running of trains is an absolute scandal. It is rarely that a train runs on time.

I am not prepared to agree that there is a tremendous amount of work thrown on the Railway Department. I doubt if the mileage run today is greater than that in a normal season. The goods traffic has been cut down to a great extent, but they are running more passenger traffic. I issued a warning here last year that a false policy was being pursued by the Railway Department. I drew attention to the dilapidated condition of the locomotive stock and certain rolling stock, and also to the skimping of the permanent way in regard to the replacement of sleepers. The report of the Commissioner shows that tens of thousands of sleepers are being kept out of the permanent way bed that should, in ordinary circumstances, be placed there. There can be only one result from this; the road bed gets out of condition just as the locomotives have done. The locomotives are breaking down, I believe, at a greater rate than ever before. When I was last in Kalgoolie there were four locomotives in the shed that had broken down, and they were being held pending the arrival of spare parts from Midland Junction. Some 18 months ago when it was being urged that a great deal of war equipment should be made in the Midland Junction workshops, I sounded

a note of warning that there was only sufficient staff then employed to keep the rolling stock and locomotives in order, and that if the staff was turned on to defence work to any extent, then to that extent our rolling stock and locomotives would be neglected. My word has come true. As a practical man I know there are not sufficient tradesmen to keep our railways going and do war work as well.

While I admit the urgency of manufacturing defence equipment, I also recognise the urgency of keeping the railways in order. If the country is invaded, we shall probably not have sufficient petrol to perform the services required to evacuate the people, particularly the women and children, to safe areas, and will have to depend on the railways. The bulk of the work will fall on the railways, and it is just as essential to keep our railways, rolling stock and permanent way 100 per cent. efficient as it is to do war work. I noticed by the paper that people in the metropolitan area are complaining of losing much time when travelling on the railways. One man said he travelled from Welshpool to Midland Junction to do shift work in the shops and lost 4½ hours in a fortnight as a result of the trains running late. Nearly all the suburban trains are running late, which does not reflect any credit on the management of the railways.

Mr. Thorn: Why should trains pull up with a couple of coaches beyond the end of the platform?

Mr. STYANTS: The hon. member would not know that in some instances the drivers are instructed to run one or two coaches beyond the end of the platform.

Mr. Thorn: First-class coaches?

Mr. STYANTS: I do not know that people should squeal about first or second class tickets. They are lucky to get transport at all in these times. Three years ago we were endeavouring to regain passenger traffic for the railways lost owing to the advent of motor cars, buses and charabanes on the road. Now we have got the traffic back, but one has only to travel in the trains to realise the poorness of the accommodation provided, and the inconvenience to which the passengers are put, to realise that at the earliest opportunity many of those people will revert to road transport.

Much has been said about manpower and the requirements of industry. I am surprised to find that the authorities continue to allow

trotting and race meetings to be held. There is no doubt that quite an army of men, even allowing for the restricted number of meetings, is still employed in this non-productive sport. Not only are there trainers, jockeys, stable hands and all those people, but there are primary producers who are giving their time to producing chaff, oats, bran and other commodities for the upkeep of the hundreds of racehorses. Many people say that jockeys, on account of their stature, would not be suitable for hard physical work. Perhaps they would not be, but there are many other jobs they could do. They could put their horses into bakers' or milkmen's carts and drive them round. I would consider it to be poetic justice if my milk was delivered by a jockey driving a racehorse in consideration for my having, in a weak moment, invested a pound when I have gone to the races. If racing was stopped, hundreds of men would be released for other employment. I am not a killjoy. I am very fond of trotting and racing. I was reared amongst horses and up to the age of 14 or 15 I rode them. I like a night at the trots, in spite of losing my modest investments of 5s. or 10s.

Mr. North: Were you always out to win?

Mr. STYANTS: Yes, that was in my youth. Despite the fascination that horses have always had for me, I maintain that in this time of stress when manpower is so urgently needed, this is one of the sports that should be dispensed with. It produces nothing, but it takes a tremendous amount of production to keep it going and absorbs in employment quite a number of hands that could be better used in other directions. In normal times, we are told that horseracing encourages the raising of re-mounts for the Army as well as providing work for many of our people, including primary producers. That is why I would not favour the discontinuance of trotting in peacetime.

Mr. Patrick: The primary producers are short of labour now.

Mr. STYANTS: Yes, but if trotting and racing were curtailed or abolished for the period of the war, 400 or 500 men would be available for more useful occupations.

As to the closing of hotels, whatever hour is decided upon, it should not be 6 p.m. I am not greatly concerned whether hotels are closed earlier or not. I think the only place in the State where excesses are tak-

ing place is the metropolitan area, and that occurs when transports arrive and troops are given leave in the city.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: During the day mostly.

Mr. STYANTS: Yes. To close the hotels at 6 p.m. will not overcome that evil because the soldiers will be able to get all the drink they require in the afternoon. The most objectionable feature of 6 o'clock closing is that drunks are emptied on to the streets at a time when so many young girls are going home from work. If the closing hour was 7 o'clock, this would not occur, and the men who wanted a pint of beer after their day's work would have an opportunity to get it. The drunks emptied out on to the street would be shepherded away before the womenfolk returned to attend pictures in the evening. I hope that whatever is finally decided upon, 6 o'clock will not be the closing hour. Any time would be better than that. As regards the country, I do not know that a great deal of excess drinking is occurring there. There is no great congregation of people in country towns and I do not know that any alteration of hotel hours is necessary there. Still, I believe that greater supervision should be exercised over the closing of hotels in the metropolitan area.

A matter that has been agitating the minds of the civic fathers in the district I represent is whether Kalgoorlie should be declared a vital area from a defence point of view. On the one hand they are told that Kalgoorlie is not regarded as a vital area, and therefore is not entitled to any of the pound-for-pound subsidy of Commonwealth money to provide air raid precautions. Still, they have to bear the whole of the inconvenience and expense inflicted on portions of the State that are considered to be vital areas. Motorists have to dim their lights and people have to pay war insurance risk on any insurances they take out. Yet Kalgoorlie is not regarded by the military authorities as a vital area and the council is not receiving any assistance for air raid precautions. It seems paradoxical that if they are in a vital area, they are not entitled to assistance for taking measures to prevent injury to inhabitants, and if they are not in a vital area, it would be logical to say that they should not be imposed upon to the extent of having to pro-

vide the war insurance risk, and do other necessary things such as the dimming of lights.

Mr. Patrick: That applies to the whole of the State now.

Mr. STYANTS: In other parts of the State it is just as inadvisable as it is in Kalgoorlie. If Kalgoorlie is not a vital area, the local authorities should not have to go to the expense of taking these precautions. It might be said that motor cars from that district would come to Perth and use undimmed headlights, but with the restrictions now operating there is no possibility of getting sufficient petrol to permit of motoring from Kalgoorlie to Perth.

I asked some questions which were answered today by the Minister for Works in connection with the fares being charged by taxi and bus proprietors for the journey from Northam station to the military camp site. In some respects they are quite unsatisfactory. We have elicited the information that an imposition has been placed upon the troops by charging an extra penny between No. 1 gate and No. 4 gate, but the Transport Board says that as regards taxis and buses from the Northam camp to Perth, this is a matter of private charter and no authority has been given to charge individual fares. The board says it has no knowledge that this is being done. If the board does not know that this is going on, all I can say is that it does not reflect much credit upon the supervision exercised by the board. The bus charge of 5d. to the camp from the Northam station is fair and equitable. The taxi charge 1s. for the three-mile run. There seems to be an inclination by a certain section of the people to exploit the soldiers. This is one case of exploitation.

The soldier is charged for a ride of three miles the sum of 1s. The fare is collected each way as he enters the taxi. I have no desire to restrict the right of taxis to run between Northam and the camp; the service is essential, but the fare is too high. It means that the taxi-driver receives 8s., if there are eight men in the car, for a run of three miles. My house is some three miles from a railway station. If I hire a taxi for myself and family, it costs me 4s. In some cases the Northam taxi drivers charge 10s. per head for transporting eight soldiers from the camp to Perth. The men do not complain about that charge, which they are quite prepared to pay. Now that petrol re-

strictions have become more severe, the taxi-drivers have increased that fare to 12s. 6d. per head, as they know the men have no other means of getting to Perth on their leave of two days per month. In some cases they have charged 15s. per man.

Mr. Berry: Is that a return fare?

Mr. STYANTS: Yes. The soldiers do not object to the charge of 10s., which is considered to be reasonable. In my opinion, the Transport Board should fix the amount to be paid for a single fare from the Northam camp to Perth and back. In urgent cases the taxi drivers have been known to charge as much as 17s. 6d. per head. The Transport Board should also fix the fares from Northam to the camp; I think a charge of 9d. would be fair. The taxi-fare should be higher than the bus fare, which I understand is 5d. If my suggestion is adopted and the Transport Board does fix the fares, then I think the men would be satisfied. The matter is a vital one as far as the soldier is concerned. Previously A.I.F. men stationed at Northam got six days' leave per month; but that period has been reduced to two days per month. The soldiers are not complaining about that, but every facility should be provided for them to reach their homes so that they may see their relatives when on leave.

The last matter I desire to mention is the recent decision of the Arbitration Court not to make an increase in the basic wage, notwithstanding that the statistician's figures show that there has been an increase in the cost of living? The intention of the Industrial Arbitration Act undoubtedly is that the court must increase the basic wage if the statistician's figures show an increase in the cost of living of 1s. per week or more. I have read the court proceedings, which seemed to me to revolve around the old question which has been discussed so often in this House, whether "may" means "shall." According to our Supreme Court judges, "may" does not mean "shall"; "may" is permissive and "shall" is mandatory. I sincerely hope that, in view of the increased cost of living, legislative action will be taken to ensure that the Arbitration Court shall grant an increase in the basic wage if the cost of living figures show an increase of 1s. per week or more. That has always been the intention of both Houses of the Legislature. I hope no time will be lost in amending the Act in that way, so

that the matter will not be left to the discretion of the members of the Arbitration Court. We must make it their duty to grant the increase if the cost of living figures show that it is warranted.

Even the statistician's figures do not reveal the total increase in the cost of living. Ask the housewife how much cost of living has increased. Tell her that the statistician says there has been an increase of 14 per cent. since the war, and she will reply that the statistician knows very little about the matter. I am inclined to pin my faith to the housewife's opinion; she knows how much she is paying in excess of what she paid before the outbreak of war, and she is a much better judge than is the statistician. Probably the latter arrives at his figures on an entirely different basis.

Finally, I want to make an appeal on behalf of the Fighting Forces of Australia, our men who, in the near future, will in all probability be meeting the enemies on the shores and sand-dunes of this State. My appeal is that they should be supplied with all the equipment they need, equipment equal to, if not better than, that supplied to the enemy. Give our men such equipment and I am satisfied, as I said before, that the Japanese or any other enemy will never gain a foothold on our coasts.

MR. PATRICK (Greenough) [4.8]: I do not intend to abuse the patience of the House very long. Personally, I think this sitting of Parliament has been amply justified; because, although we have had a spate of talk, we certainly have derived extremely useful information. The Premier stated that Parliaments in the Eastern States have not considered it necessary to assemble at the present juncture. Perhaps they are well satisfied there; they may not have any ground for complaint, but I certainly think that we in this State have. Isolated as we are from the rest of Australia, our voice does not seem to carry very much weight in the Eastern States. For instance, there are two very important questions. One was touched upon by the member for Mt. Magnet (Mr. Triat), who intends to bring forward a motion before the session closes for the furnishing of a clear statement of the Commonwealth Government's intentions with regard to our goldmining industry. Up to date, we have had a series of what might be termed furtive attacks upon that industry.

In spite of the explanation of the Minister for Lands, who I am sorry is not here at the moment, we should know something more about the wheat position. Personally, I find it almost impossible to follow the opinion expressed by the Minister for Commerce (Mr. Scully) on this question. I notice the Minister for Lands has now returned. When Mr. Scully first took action, he stated in the Press that he did not think there was any necessity for restricting wheat-growing, because he considered there was no great surplus of wheat in Australia. Later on he declared himself in favour of giving a guaranteed price, but limiting production to 3,000 bushels per farm. That, I think, was the position when the House adjourned.

[Mr. Withers took the Chair.]

The Minister for Lands: It is still the position.

MR. PATRICK: Yes. The Minister reverted to that position again. Now, the Minister for Lands said that when he went to the Eastern States, he prepared his case on the basis that there would be a guaranteed price for wheat, but that the production would be limited to 3,000 bushels per farm. Unfortunately, when the Minister arrived at the conference, the Minister for Commerce had again changed his mind. I have no great objection to restriction on wheat-growing; I think it is necessary at the present time, but Western Australia should not be the only State to which the restriction is applied. It should apply throughout Australia. I have here a copy of the "Weekly Times" of the 25th February last. This paper reaches me from Melbourne, and I find it is as reliable on this occasion as on others. It states:-

Several proposals for the further restriction of the area planted to wheat in Australia were considered at Canberra last week. It is expected, however, that only two of them will be seriously entertained by the Federal Cabinet. One scheme provides for a general restriction for the four main wheat-growing States—Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales—and it is understood that the favoured alternative suggests heavy restrictions on acreage in Western and South Australia, with only slight reductions in the other two States. No restrictions are proposed for Queensland and Tasmania, because those States do not grow enough for normal internal consumption and have to import from the other States. On a general restriction, conference recommended a reduction on a sliding scale according to acreage sown in previous

years, an average being taken over, say, the past five years, with a unit basis of 250 to 300 acres as a minimum. The percentage reduction will increase as the normal average sown rises. If the alternative scheme is adopted, Western and South Australia will suffer, but it is stressed that in both those States the carry-over of wheat from previous seasons is abnormally heavy, with little prospect of disposal because of the lack of shipping and other transport facilities.

At that time two very different schemes were proposed: One was a general reduction throughout Australia and the other was a fairly heavy reduction in two States. In the end, it seemed as if the reduction was to apply to Western Australia alone. The Minister for Lands has said that, when he arrived in the Eastern States, the Federal Treasurer was accompanied by economic experts, who expressed the opinion that it appeared as if a crop of 164,000,000 bushels of wheat would be grown in Australia, and that something would have to be done about it.

What has been done about it, Mr. Deputy Speaker? It is proposed to reduce that 164,000,000 bushels by 11,000,000 bushels, and that reduction shall be confined to one State. Moreover, the restriction on this State is compulsory. The Minister for Commerce appealed to the other States to reduce their acreage voluntarily as much as possible; that is, to reduce the quantity that was allowed. The average of New South Wales for wheat-growing is some 20,000,000 bushels per annum more than that of Western Australia, and the farmers of New South Wales use practically no fertiliser. So it is easily conceivable that the Australian crop for the year could be 164,000,000 bushels, even with a small reduction in Western Australia. So, personally, I cannot see how the Treasurer has gained anything at all. I do not see that the proposal is worth while in any particular. As I say, we can agree that a reduction is necessary but it should be on an Australian basis. I am not one of those who decry the great surplus of wheat in Australia.

We are in a very fortunate position. We know what things were like in 1914-15, when the previous war started. There was so little wheat in Australia after the 1914 drought that wheat had to be imported for human consumption—that is, for conversion into flour—by every State. In this State the tractor was not then developed, and crushed maize had to be imported to feed horses for the putting in of the 1915 crop.

Australia had a large crop in 1915. I think it was a record crop of 180,000,000 bushels. I do not propose to decry the surplus in Australia because I do not think we can have too much of a good thing, though the surplus may be slightly embarrassing at present. But why should there be discrimination as regards one State?

The Minister for Lands: Two States! South Australia is included.

Mr. PATRICK: That has not been published. Even in wartime I do not know whether it is not perhaps advisable to create what amounts to a serious violation of the Federal Constitution. If it were a worth while reduction, it might be advisable. I would like to draw attention to Section 117 of the Commonwealth Constitution. It is one of the finest clauses in that Constitution, and reads—

A subject of the Queen resident in any State shall not be subject in any other State to any of the disabilities or discriminations which would not be applicable to him if he were a subject of the Queen resident in such other State.

I suggest also that that is an admirable way of drafting a section. In this State, the drafting of a similar section would occupy something like a column of the "West Australian"! There is no doubt what that section conveys. We have had a sample of discrimination which is a violation of the Federal Constitution. That has been tested by advice in the past. There was one occasion on which the Federal Government was going to discriminate amongst the different States with regard to the quality of export lambs, and the Western Australian representative on the Meat Board raised the point regarding discrimination. It was taken to the Federal Attorney General's Department, and he decided it could not be done.

There is another point I would like to mention in passing regarding dressing with superphosphate. From what I have seen of agriculture in the past, I think it would be possible to grow a normal crop, at least for one year, with a much lighter dressing of super. than we have been accustomed to, because it is doubtful, with the average dressings in Western Australia, whether the whole of the super. is expended. There is always an amount of unexpended super. left in the soil. I had an experience of that as a young man at an Agricultural College in South Australia. Tests were made on land which had had heavy dressings of

super. over a series of years, and it was found that that land which had been so dressed and had no manure put on it for one year, gave as big a crop as any other part of the farm. So I think it is possible, for a year at least, to grow a good crop with a much lighter dressing of super. than has been applied in the past.

A sort of campaign has been waged against this State in regard to the condition of our wheat in storage. Two experts were sent over here. One was Mr. A. Wilson, M.H.R., and the other was Senator Clothier. I do not know what Senator Clothier's position was: whether he was an expert or an assistant expert. I think I have been farming longer than has Mr. Wilson, and I would not make any claim to be capable of going round examining stores of wheat and pronouncing whether they were in a good condition or not. That is a matter for some more expert opinion than Mr. Wilson's. Incidentally, I might mention that there has appeared in the Press a statement that Mr. Wilson and another Federal member are to be sent on a tour around Australia to select sites in the different States for the storage of wool. That is most extraordinary. If there are not men in our Government departments here, who know the State and are capable of selecting sites for wool storage, there is something wrong.

The Minister for Lands: I do not know that the Federal Government made much of a job of selecting sites for the storage of wheat!

Mr. PATRICK: The Minister is correct. I do not know who was responsible for that, but the sites were badly selected. To consider sending two men from the Eastern States to Western Australia, a State of which they know nothing, with a view to selecting the best site for the storing of wool, is absolutely farcical. I have not seen Mr. Wilson's report regarding the position of our wheat—I believe it was a gloomy report—but the views I am prepared to accept before those of Mr. Wilson are the views of a man who knows our wheat from the commercial point of view. I refer to Mr. H. E. Braine. I have here a small pamphlet prepared by him on this subject and I think he sums up the position very well in this paragraph:—

Fundamentally the problem is economic and in view of its relatively small economic importance to date, it is potential rather than immediate. I define the problem as that of keeping stored wheat in sound, merchantable

condition without incurring any considerable cost or loss; in this regard it should be known that the payment made by the British Government for the safe-keeping of its wheat in Australia will more than cover any monetary loss incurred as a result of weevil activities.

I believe that the storage is at the rate of 3/16ths of a penny a week, which should cover a considerable loss from weevils. In about 1918 there was a tremendous stock of bagged wheat in Geraldton. It had been stored there for two or three years. They started to turn it and blew the weevils out. Every building on the ocean front in Marine-terrace was troubled with weevils for a week or two, yet the wheat which looked so badly infested returned a very good proportion of marketable grain.

The Minister for Lands: That might be an argument for bagged wheat.

Mr. PATRICK: It looked as weevil-infected as any wheat in bulk today, but in spite of the fact that Geraldton suffered a disability in that hotels and shops were smothered with weevils—one could not dodge them for a week—the wheat returned a good proportion of marketable grain. Western Australia has always had a good record for the manner in which its wheat has been kept. During that period a different system was in operation from that of today. As the Minister for Works may remember, every State looked after its own wheat. There was a separate wheat pool in every State, and this State was the only one which had a decent return from the wheat sold. South Australia lost over 50 per cent. and the other States lost a considerable amount.

The Minister for Lands: One allegation is that it was to the merchants' interests for the storage to be available.

Mr. PATRICK: I have heard that allegation, too. Then, as in these days, this State was regarded as something of a mug. New South Wales exported wheat at 10s. to 12s. a bushel and, running short of supplies, made up the quantity required from Western Australian wheat, for which 4s. a bushel was paid. That is how Western Australia was treated in those days. Our wheat had a very fine record then, and I think it has the same record today. As regards loss from weevils, I think the Minister's home State was the worst in that respect. According to an official statement made last year, it was estimated that the loss to Australia in wheat was .044d. per bushel, half of which was in Queensland.

The wheat in that State was not stored for any length of time because it was only grown for local consumption. I take it that the weevil pest is pretty bad there!

What I am concerned about with regard to the restriction on wheat-growing and other things is the effect on the farmer's finance. On the revenue side there are decreased crops, stationary or uncertain prices, and a shortage of labour. Profits have been compulsorily reduced. Then there are stationary prices for wool. On the expenditure side are increased costs and the immovable burden of interest. There is no cost plus system or wartime loading remuneration such as exists in some other industries. If the farmer's income is restricted either by law or present conditions, the payment of interest should be partly or wholly abrogated during the war. It is necessary for producers to produce food required during the war and they should be relieved of the anxiety caused by the debt position, so that their morale may remain unshaken. There is one man living close to my farm who was a skilled tradesman before he went on the land. He has always paid his interest, but this year, for some reason or other, he has completely dropped his bundle, and the other day he walked off the farm with his wife and five children because he considered that by doing so he would find plenty of work to do at his trade, and would be relieved of anxiety.

The Minister for Lands: His was a very good property, too.

Mr. PATRICK: Yes, it ranks as a first-class security, and the man ranks as a first-class security. I know another man in the Upper Chapman area, recognised as an honest and good farmer who, in spite of the efforts of his neighbours to dissuade him, walked off his farm the other day. These men are dropping their bundles, and it is necessary that some action be taken to preserve the morale of those remaining. The labour position is also very difficult. On my property we generally have three or four men all the year round, but today we have one married man. We were able to secure a youth 16 years of age but after a short period he walked off the property without giving notice. He had secured a job with Co-operative Bulk Handling, Ltd., at £5 a week. We cannot compete with that sort of thing. We hear a lot of talk about manpower, but in the farming districts those now engaged are generally elderly

men. For instance, the man on my farm is considerably older than I am—and I certainly am no chicken.

During the course of his speech the member for Mt. Magnet (Mr. Triat) referred to the goldmining industry. The circumstances culminating in the present position developed in a rather peculiar manner. In the first place a statement appeared in all the Australian papers and was cabled to London. Ostensibly the statement was attributed to Senator Collings, and it was to the effect that the goldmining industry was to be liquidated and closed down. The statement was regarded seriously, and the next day the value of securities on the Stock Exchange in London dropped 50 per cent., and has remained at that level ever since. The statement was answered by our Minister for Mines—I am sorry he is not present; I do not know if he was in a frivolous mood when he issued his statement—and in that respect the following appeared in the Press:—

Senator Collings's gloomy forecast from Canberra of drastic curtailment of goldmining brought consternation in Kalgoorlie, amazement in Perth. The Chamber of Mines wouldn't commit itself without hearing more. The Minister for Mines wasn't so cautious. Gold, he said, could always be mined; it wouldn't run away. If the Federal Government considered other war minerals such as copper, lead, tin, tantalite, mica, asbestos, antimony, tungsten or molybdenite of greater importance, goldmining would have to lose some of its manpower, to enable those minerals to be produced in greater quantities. It is not known whether men will be switched from the Westralian gold industry to other mineral deposits in the State or whether all or any of them will be transferred to eastern Australia.

About a week later—I have all the newspaper clippings dealing with the matter but I shall not go through all of them—a statement appeared from the Premier which I regard as the best I have perused on the subject. In it he summed up the whole position and indicated that he proposed to send a telegram to the Prime Minister (Mr. Curtin). His statement included the following:—

In view of all the circumstances, therefore, I sent a telegram to the Prime Minister (Mr. Curtin) briefly setting out the opposition of the State Government to any suggestion of this nature and asking that before any action is taken the State Government should be consulted. I have now received a reply from Mr. Curtin's private secretary stating that the Prime Minister did not make any statement in regard to this matter and that he was informed that Senator Collings also did not make a statement.

That appeared about a week after the original intimation was published in the Australian Press and had been cabled to London, yet Senator Collings did not trouble to deny the statement attributed to him until the Premier had despatched his telegram to the Prime Minister. After that the position quietened down for a while, and members know what transpired recently. Last night the Minister for Mines informed us that he had never been consulted on this matter and that he had received no information about it at all. The Federal member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. H. V. Johnson) had been sent over to interview the different mining interests to prepare them for a reduction, yet the Premier had asked that he should be consulted before any action is taken. He has not received any communication from the Federal Government. In my opinion we should have a very plain statement from the Prime Minister regarding this matter, and I am pleased the member for Mt. Magnet has indicated his intention to move a motion dealing with the subject. In my opinion the manpower provisions should be applied to many less important industries before goldmining is affected. In many of our industries men could be replaced by women and, as the member for Mt. Magnet stated, not many men would be obtained from the goldmining industry if all the mines were closed down. This is by no means the only subject that has been badly handled by some Federal Ministers or Federal officials.

Another matter of importance relates to the scarcity of commodities and other supplies. Last year a statement appeared in the Press that there would be a scarcity of blankets.

The Minister for Lands: Did not a man associated with the leather trade say that boots would be scarce?

Mr. PATRICK: One firm had a supply of blankets that would normally last over the coming winter, but its stocks were cleared out within two or three weeks. The same position cropped up regarding cosmetics. It was said that supplies were to be stopped, rationed, or dealt with by some other means, and we had the spectacle of women lining up seven or eight deep at the cosmetic counters. Some of them bought £1 or £2 worth of cosmetics where normally they would have spent a few shillings.

Mr. Thorn: Quite a number spent more than £5 on securing supplies.

Mr. PATRICK: That sort of thing is hopelessly wrong. It means that others have to go short that a few may have more than they require.

Mr. Thorn: Some firms were forced to put their stocks away.

Mr. PATRICK: It is wrong that such statements should be released for publication in the Press and thus encourage people already inclined to hoard to buy unduly heavily. I heard a conversation between two women the other day, when one said to the other, "Mustard is going to be very scarce; I have just been down to the store to buy a tin." The other lady said, "But you do not use mustard." The other lady replied, "But that does not matter; if it is going to be scarce I might as well have a tin." The same position arose regarding tea.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Some firms are advertising washing blue and yet there are no supplies.

Mr. PATRICK: Apparently the only remedy the Federal Government could see was to appoint a board or something to limit supplies.

The Minister for Lands: At any rate we have a very bored public now.

Mr. PATRICK: If coffee should be scarce I suppose we will have another board appointed. The last time I read the details, I understand there were 90 Federal boards already operating.

In certain respects I commend the work of the Civil Defence Council in the metropolitan area, although much of that work seems to have been wasted, according to speeches we have listened to, by certain people being allowed to exhibit lights at full blast. One matter that requires attention relates to the dimming of motor headlights, for no steps have apparently been taken to prevent exploitation. In the "West Australian" recently the following appeared:—

Various prices are being charged to motorists for the installation of regulation headlamp masks. Following a lead from the Eastern States, some persons are charging 24s. As the masks can be purchased from retail shops in Perth for 11s. 9d. a pair, the charging of 12s. 3d. for fitting them is being criticised. It has been stated that the retail price of 11s. 9d. allows for a considerable margin above the actual cost price.

I have not been able to find one place in Perth where I was able to procure masks at 11s. 9d. a pair. The standard charge seems to be 25s. a pair. I was one of the

mugs that bought at that price and I understand that the charge has since been reduced. One garage proprietor near where I live bought a considerable number at the price stated and still has some on hand. Seeing that people were compelled to instal the required masks on their headlamps the department should have taken steps to provide a standard mask at a specified price. That would have prevented the exploitation of motorists. I know of instances of country people bringing their cars to town and inquiring about the cost of painting the white lines and providing the masks. The charges quoted to them were £2 12s. 6d. for painting the white lines and 35s. for providing and installing the masks. Anyone could have done the painting for a few shillings, but most people have not the time to devote to it.

Mr. J. Hegney: The painting of a car would not mean more than two hours' work.

Mr. PATRICK: Dealing now with the black-out in the metropolitan area, I contend that some restriction should be imposed upon the use of cars during certain hours. Under existing conditions quite a number of accidents have occurred. Members will have noticed the case of the car in which two soldiers were riding. The car collided with a girl who was near her milk cart, and the young woman's name is now on the danger list. There was an instance of a car driving into a stationary cart. Obviously, some protection should be given to the public during the black-out, and the only vehicles allowed on the road should be those engaged in essential services. A little while ago a notice was issued by the Chief Traffic Inspector warning the public that in the near future cars would be allowed to park only at certain points outside the city block. Evidently a measure such as I suggest was contemplated, and I think such a step is highly desirable.

As for the position on country roads, if one desires to commit suicide, all that is necessary is to drive a car at night. Particularly does that apply during the winter months when some cow usually chooses the centre of the road to camp, and with horses and sheep wandering about accidents cannot be avoided. Then again the problems in the country districts are accentuated on account of the evacuees from the city. In portion of my district a survey was made with a view to the possible evacuation of people from Geraldton, which is considered

a danger area. It was found that much of the accommodation that would normally be available was already occupied by people from the metropolitan area. Difficulties have also arisen regarding reserve stocks of foodstuffs in country towns. Supplies on the basis of meeting the requirements of the normal population for three months were provided, but in some instances the population of the centres has more than doubled and further reserves will have to be provided. One recommendation of the Australian War Council was—

That destructible stores and stocks of all kinds should be dispersed as far as possible and located inland.

Obviously, much larger supplies of foodstuffs are now requisite. I presume that, as regards the recommendation referring to destructible stores and stocks, commodities like wheat and wool are included. The policy seems to have been to drag all the wheat and wool down to the coastal areas. Only a week or two ago the War Board was negotiating with the Fremantle Council for land on which to erect additional wool stores. In the present position of affairs, it will be much better to leave that wool on the farms. As to wheat, the Minister mentioned the big bin at Bassendean as a danger. It was foolish to put that bin there at all. The wheat would have done much better at Mullewa. It is foolish, again, to bring all foodstuffs into the metropolitan area.

There is the drink problem, which I leave to members with greater knowledge and experience than I possess. However, I recall, on one aspect of the question, the watering-down of spirits and beers. An attempt was made by the Premier, when he was a private member, to put through a Bill for watering down whisky. It seems that Western Australia has a higher grade of whisky than has any other State of the Commonwealth. If one wants whisky equal to Western Australian quality in another State, one has to ask for a "double." In present circumstances it might be desirable to take steps in the direction of lowering the alcoholic content of spirits and beers.

I shall not pose as an authority on war matters. Like the Prime Minister, I am prepared to leave them to the military authorities. Several speakers have given accounts of what is going to happen, and what is not going to happen, in this State.

I shall not attempt to express opinions on such matters. I merely say that we should endeavour to use the limited resources we have to their fullest capacity. I call to mind that a black-out was ordered on the east coast of Australia without any mention being made of this State. Perhaps that was owing to the fact that all the industrial equipment is on the east coast. We are the largest of the Australian States, and we have a sparse population, and the enemy often attacks the weakest point. Therefore it is necessary that we should be as well defended here as Eastern Australia is. Country Party members have worked out a scheme to co-operate more closely with the Government. I shall not go into that proposal because it will be debated later on. I note with pleasure the presence of American soldiers in this country with very fine equipment. Their appearance is timely and enheartening.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

MR. HUGHES (East Perth) [4.35]: I am glad that Parliament has been called together, because I think members are hardly getting a fair deal from the general public. When asked questions about matters relating to the war, we were not able to answer them. Many persons think we ought to be doing this, and doing that; mostly things we have no power to do. Therefore the convening of Parliament has served to clarify the position. Certainly the information given by the Minister for Lands on the food question will be appreciated. It will enable members to answer the questions of their constituents. Similar remarks apply to the information concerning civil defence which was supplied by the Minister for Mines. In the metropolitan area civil defence is, and has been, a very live question. Apparently it is thought that members of Parliament should not actually do anything, but should only discuss generalities. However, certain things connected with the war effort I regard as of major importance to the State, and as justifying legislation. Otherwise we shall be in a position described in the first musical comedy I ever had the privilege of witnessing. When I was a telegraph boy I once had the pleasure of delivering a message to John F. Sheridan, who was then producing "The Island of Bhong-Bhong." The play had two theme songs—"It is a lovely day for a walk and a talk," and "I wish you a Merry Christ-

mas and a Happy New Year, a pocketful of money and a bellyful of beer." Unless we do something we shall merely re-enact, without the talent of John F. Sheridan, "The Island of Bhong-Bhong."

The member for Canning (Mr. Cross) raised the question of a recent decision of the Arbitration Court. In our Industrial Arbitration Act appears Section 124A, which was inserted for a special purpose.

Point of Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order! I do not think the hon. member will be in order in discussing that matter now, seeing that he has placed on the notice paper a motion for the introduction of a Bill, which is now pending legislation.

Mr. Hughes: The fact that one has given notice of a Bill does not eliminate him alone from discussing the subject. The subject has already been discussed by members. The fact of notice of a Bill having been given does not preclude, I submit, a general debate such as this discussion. Leave must be given to introduce the Bill. The Bill has no prospect of being discussed until that leave has been obtained. With all due deference I submit, Mr. Speaker, that you would be hard put to find a Standing Order limiting discussion on a subject such as this, particularly when only the right of the member who has given notice is to be limited.

Mr. Speaker: I am ruling that the hon. member will not be in order in discussing a pending Bill which he proposes to bring down. Will the hon. member resume his seat?

Mr. Hughes: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: I acknowledge that certain members have made passing reference to the subject, but they have not referred to the subject matter of the Bill as the member for East Perth proposes to do now.

Mr. Hughes: I do not wish to deal with the subject matter of the Bill, which will be one of procedure. I propose to deal with the negative position that has arisen through the action of the Arbitration Court. I do not know, Mr. Speaker, that you could find a Standing Order supporting your ruling.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member has given notice of a certain Bill, and I must rule that he is not entitled to discuss the subject matter of the Bill at the present time, or until the Bill has been discharged from the notice paper.

Mr. Hughes: Does that mean, Sir, that I alone am not allowed to refer to the decision of the Arbitration Court?

Mr. Speaker: I am ruling that neither the member for East Perth, nor the member for West Perth, nor the Premier for that matter, is entitled to discuss the matter at the present time.

Dissent from Speaker's Ruling.

Mr. Hughes: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I must move—

That the House dissent from the Speaker's ruling.

The general debate, I take it, is by analogy in the same category as the Address-in-reply debate, in that there is open discussion upon all matters that members wish to bring forward, and members hitherto have exercised that right, even to the specific instance of the member for Canning having dealt with this subject. There can be no question of discussing something that is the subject of a Bill before the House, because leave has not yet been granted to introduce the Bill. Consequently there is no Bill before the House. Furthermore, it would be impossible to know what will be in a Bill which is not even drafted. Therefore the fact that I have given notice of a Bill does not, I submit, under any Standing Order preclude me from the right of exercising the same privileges as other members have exercised in discussing this particular subject.

If the position were otherwise, an Address-in-reply debate could be stifled by the action of a member giving notice of numbers of Bills, because if there were some similarity of title between one of those Bills and the designation of a subject of debate, discussion would be precluded. Therefore, particularly now when we are seeking information, and this session has been called for that purpose, a liberal interpretation should be placed upon the Standing Orders. If there is any doubt—and I do not admit there is—about this motion we can discuss anything, even though there are 100 Bills on the notice paper. We ought not to limit the opportunity of members to ventilate a subject which may precipitate a major crisis in this State. If this Parliament does not rectify this matter the workers will probably go on strike and I, for one, would say they are entitled to do so. I say, Sir, that your ruling should be disagreed with.

Mr. McDonald: May I ask for information? Can we be directed to any Standing

Order which may assist us in our consideration of this matter?

Mr. Speaker: It has been the rule ever since I have been in this House that pending legislation on the notice paper cannot be discussed under any other heading. The member for East Perth this morning gave notice to amend Section 124A of the Industrial Arbitration Act. A few moments ago when he rose to speak on this motion he started off to quote Section 124A. Having given notice of a Bill to amend that section I claim that it does prevent him from discussing it now. I have no right to suppose, as the member for East Perth suggests, that he will not be given leave to introduce the Bill. It is a very uncommon occurrence in this House for that to happen.

I do not remember more than one application for leave to introduce a Bill being refused. I have to suppose that tomorrow or the day after that, when the member moves for leave to introduce this Bill, leave will be granted. While it is on the notice paper he is not entitled to discuss it, otherwise we could have the member for East Perth putting up a very long discussion on Section 124A today, and tomorrow, on his motion for leave to introduce the Bill, discussing the matter over again. After having discussed Section 124A of the Industrial Arbitration Act today, the member for East Perth could discuss the principle for borrowing money in this State and perhaps make a speech for one hour on it, and tomorrow move the motion standing in his name for a select committee to inquire into borrowing. I claim he has no right to discuss it at the present time.

Question put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	....	....	....	11
Noes	....	....	....	21
				—
Majority against	....			10
				—

AYES.

Mr. Abbott
Mr. Berry
Mr. Hughes
Mr. Keenan
Mr. Kelly
Mr. McDonald

Mr. North
Mr. Thorn
Mr. Watts
Mr. Willmott
Mr. Seward

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Coverley
Mr. Cross
Mr. Doney
Mr. Fox
Mr. Hawke
Mr. J. Hegney
Mr. W. Hegney
Mr. Latham
Mr. Leahy
Mr. Marshall
Mr. Millington

Mr. Needham
Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. F. C. L. Smith
Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Triat
Mr. Willcock
Mr. Wise
Mr. Withers
Mr. Wilson

(Teller.)

PAIRS.

AYRS.		NOES.
Mr. North	|	Mr. Styan's
Mr. J. H. Smith	|	Mr. Holman

Question thus negatived.

Debate resumed.

Mr. HUGHES: This discussion, if anything, was primarily a discussion on the war. If there is to be an intelligent discussion on the war the first thing to do is to get down to the fundamentals that cause a war. I have here a book of only a couple hundred pages or so which is well worth reading because it will give us a proper understanding of the war and what caused it. The title of the book is, "From Versailles to Danzig," and it is by Claude Golding. It sets out in a very readable way the problems which led up to the present war. These books are not easy to get nowadays as the copies are limited. I feel that if all members had read this book and appreciated—

Mr. Withers: Why not take it as read?

Mr. HUGHES: I do not see how we can do that. If I felt able to I would make a summary of the book for the House, but that would be very unfair to the author. It is more than likely that there are fine points in the language which would be quite clear to the member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Tonkin), but which would escape my lesser knowledge of English. It would not, therefore, be fair either to the author or to members to deprive this House of much information. I propose to read this book, starting at the very beginning where the author examines the answers. To hear people talking about Hitler having caused the war, and singing hymns of hate, is to my mind, all wrong. After all is said and done Hitler played a very small part in causing the present war. In my opinion, which may not be of much value on this point, three men were more responsible for the present war than anyone else, namely, Poincare, Foch, and Clemenceau, and this was due to their ferocious outlook. They could not see any further than their villages in France, were actuated by revenge, and were unreasonable. When it came to arranging the Armistice terms, instead of trying to lay the foundations of a sane peace and taking a broad international view to get a permanent peace, their training and whole lives precluded them from getting a comprehensive view of the causes

of the war. We have read how Poincare put the terms to the German delegation, and when they remarked how hard they were, he said, "You are not here to argue; you are here to accept." That was not the way to lay the foundations of a lasting peace.

We know on the authority of Lloyd George, who was Prime Minister at the time and was present at the Peace Conference, that Poincare could not approach in a rational way the consideration of peace matters. During the war he was located at a little railway station. A scare was raised—it proved a false alarm—and Poincare fled to safety, but he was irritated because he had to put up with a good deal of "chiaking" on account of having left in a hurry. When it came to setting out the terms, all that the French leaders wanted to do was to get even with Germany. When the French Government prepared its reparation claims, it claimed compensation for the devastated areas of North France exceeding the total value of all the industrial equipment in the whole of France. To show that I am not relying on my own opinion, I propose to read this book dealing with the causes of the war. Chapter 1 deals with the Armistice.

Mr. Warner: You do not intend to read all of it, surely.

Mr. HUGHES: It is well worth listening to. The book states—

At sundown on November 7th, 1918, a cavalcade of motor cars passed through the German lines near La Chapelle, and halted in no-man's land. Fluttering from the window of the leading car was a white flag. The pandemonium of gunfire ceased. They resumed their way slowly, bumpily, over the shell-battered ground, and approached the French lines.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I must rule that the hon. member is not discussing the statement made by the Premier or anything relative to it, and therefore is not in order in continuing to read that book.

Mr. HUGHES: What am I allowed to discuss?

Mr. SPEAKER: I am ruling that you are not in order in reading that book.

Mr. HUGHES: I regret that I shall have to disagree with your ruling because other members have been allowed to quote extensively.

Mr. SPEAKER: Put your motion of dissent in writing.

Dissent from Speaker's Ruling.

Mr. Hughes : I move—

That the House dissent from the Speaker's ruling.

I very much regret that I have twice had to disagree with you, but a principle is involved, particularly as we are supposed to be fighting for democracy, and I think it is a member's duty, even at the risk of incurring the displeasure of Mr. Speaker, to protect to the utmost a member's right to free discussion. The statement made by the Premier claimed to be a statement of the war position, and when we begin to discuss the war we are led into all sorts of avenues. Under this discussion we have had all sorts of statements about the war, including disclosures which I should say would be useful to the enemy, namely that our men are without equipment and that if our men were called out they could not be equipped. There has been no limit to the discussion.

We have also been told that the commander of the Forces is not the right man. I submit that we cannot get a proper understanding of the war until we know the causes of the war, and that it would be very beneficial to this community if we had a greater dissemination of information as to the causes and consequences of the war. That is merely a continuous childish attempt to instil hate into people, and it will make this war the cause of another war, just as the first world war was. What freedom remains to members of the House if they are precluded from quoting authoritative works? Most of the speeches in this Chamber contain extensive quotations, sometimes from works and occasionally from reports. Were it not so, our minds would become so cramped that we should not be able to exchange with each other views garnered in recess.

If Mr. Speaker puts that restricted interpretation on the Standing Orders, a member who has done research work will not be permitted to give other members the benefit of that research work. Mr. Speaker will shut us up in watertight research if the results obtained by a member doing such work must be limited to the knowledge of that member alone. Under those conditions there cannot be any exchange of information and opinion derived from research. One man cannot do all the research work needed for the understanding of problems coming before the House, but

the results of research work are to be disregarded. I think I am fairly safe in saying that Mr. Speaker cannot find a Standing Order, or any authority in "May," declaring that a member shall not quote from a volume in this House. Had the volume been one dealing with the liquor trade and stating the proportions of ingredients and so forth, you might have declared, Mr. Speaker, that that was not relevant to this debate. The liquor question has been extensively debated here, notwithstanding a notice appearing on the notice paper.

Your ruling, Mr. Speaker, will not be for today only. You, Sir, are among the Immortals, because what you rule is recorded in "Hansard" for the generations to come after the Jap has ceased to be a menace and Japan has become an appendage to China. When China has absorbed Japan, the volumes of this House will be produced for the quotation of your ruling, blest with the weight of antiquity and endorsed by your authority. You, Sir, may gain a victory over me in this particular clash of words. If you win, I shall be the first to congratulate you. But, Sir, there is a greater issue involved.

Mr. Speaker : I realise that the ruling I am about to give will go down the years, as the member for East Perth has said. I shall leave future generations to say that if ever a Speaker gave a right ruling, it is this ruling. The member for East Perth states that the rights of members have been taken away from them as regards freedom of discussion. Nobody knows better than does the member for East Perth that members have no right to discuss this matter, and that I went outside the Standing Orders in taking on myself the responsibility, as a man holding this position, has to do at certain times, of saying that I was prepared to allow reasonable discussion. I also said that any member wishing to object would have right on his side. I leave it to the House to say whether I have allowed a free and full discussion, and whether I have taken away the rights of any member. The remarks of the member for East Perth are not relevant to the Premier's statement. So far I have allowed a measure of free discussion. I leave the question to the House.

Mr. Marshall : I regret very much that a difference of opinion has arisen between yourself, Mr. Speaker, and the member for

East Perth. The member for East Perth attached importance to the right of members to quote an authority on the subject. He based all his arguments on what you, Sir, ruled on the score of relevancy. No member's right to discuss has ever been limited if his matter was relevant to the subject before the Chair. Probably this Chamber has lost the advantage of some important quotation which the member for East Perth desired to make. Had he selected matters relevant to the discussion in the Chamber, the position would have been different. I hold, Mr. Speaker, that you have ruled correctly. The few lines quoted by the member for East Perth were scarcely relevant. The whole of the authority which he is quoting was based upon a war which took place 25 years ago, and not upon the present one. He may have had quotations from the first war which would have been relevant to the discussion, and such quotations could have been made.

I am afraid the member for East Perth over-ran himself; and so, in his eager desire to quote much matter that was irrelevant, he put himself completely outside the Standing Orders. If we permit members to indulge in irrelevancy to any extent, there will be no end to it. I have had this experience in this Chamber, as has every other member: Let one member divert to any degree at all from relevancy, the succeeding speaker will wish to cover that ground, and a little more, until we get to the stage where we have more irrelevancy than relevancy. On the score of relevancy, not on the score of a member having the freedom to quote from any authority, I think your ruling, Mr. Speaker, is correct. I am sure the member for East Perth need not be concerned about the freedom of members, who are privileged and have the opportunity to bring forward any matter they may desire, provided they proceed with their argument along the lines of relevancy. I regret that we may have lost some valuable information because the member for East Perth hastily decided to become irrelevant.

Mr. McDonald: No member of the House is more anxious than I am to see this debate confined to proper limits. As I said a day or two ago, it is essentially a time for action and not for words. I would be the first to deprecate any abuse of the time of Parliament, of members, of Ministers, and of the people of the State. But I do think,

with very great respect, that the irrelevancy of the quotation by the member for East Perth had hardly been established. He had not proceeded far enough to indicate whether his allusions were relevant or not. Possibly the mistake he made was his playful insinuation that he intended to read the whole book, although I do not believe for a moment that he intended to do so. That would be a different matter altogether. But I am always opposed, rightly or wrongly, to any limitations on the right of free speech in this House. I think that in this debate you, Sir, have properly adopted the attitude that you intend to allow a wide latitude; and at this time, of all times, I think a wide latitude is essential. I hope that latitude will always be exercised with responsibility to the members of the House. Had the member for East Perth, in my humble opinion, arrived at a stage when his references were not relevant, there may be some ground, possibly, for taking exception. I respectfully suggest, however, that that time has not yet arisen.

Question put and negatived.

Debate resumed.

Mr. HUGHES: I ask leave to withdraw three notices standing in my name on the notice paper.

Mr. SPEAKER: My attention has been drawn to the fact that the hon. member cannot withdraw the notices until they are called upon.

Mr. HUGHES: May I ask who is running this House?

The Minister for Labour: You are not.

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for East Perth will proceed.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

Mr. HUGHES: It is hard to know now what I can speak to, but I take it that I will be allowed to allude to anything that has already been mentioned in the debate. Many things rightfully came before the House during this debate. As I mentioned previously, State members of Parliament have come in for a great deal of unfair criticism with regard to the war effort. People ask, "What is the State Parliament doing?" They seem to think that State Parliamentarians should be associated with all sorts of activities connected with the war effort. If those people would but make themselves acquainted with the State

and Federal Constitutions, they would realise that there is not such a lot that State members can do in the conduct of the war. As you are aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, prior to 1901, Western Australia was a sovereign State and had absolute power to make laws for the order and good government of Western Australia.

No authority, except the Imperial Parliament, had any right to interfere with the activities of this Parliament. In those days Western Australia was charged with the responsibility, among other things, of providing for the defence of the State. We had our own defence force then. One of the strongest reasons put forward why the Australian colonies should federate was this very matter of defence. When the second Federal Congress met and there was difficulty in the way of arriving at a conclusion whether the States should federate or not, the defence question was the factor that convinced certain people we could not afford, in this island continent, to set up six different authorities for the purpose of conducting a defensive war. So, when the Imperial Parliament passed the Act that established the Commonwealth of Australia, it set out three classes of powers. Some powers were to be exercised by the Commonwealth exclusively; some were to be exercised by the States alone; and some, known as concurrent powers, were to be exercised by each State and the Commonwealth. Both had jurisdiction, but if there were a clash of authority, a Federal enactment would prevail.

We have, of course, the powers that are left. In Canada, the various provinces have certain definite powers. The Commonwealth, in this case has the defined powers and the State has the residual. Anything not taken from us we still have. Early in the history of the Commonwealth the Federal Government had the exclusive control of defence in Australia. The State has no legal right at all to interfere in anything that refers to defence. There are in the Commonwealth three statutes dealing with this matter. The first is the Defence Act. Secondly, there are Acts that establish and maintain the Navy. Then later on an Act was passed establishing and maintaining the Air Force. Under those Acts are regulations to give effect to the working and maintenance of the three fighting services. Those Acts hardly touch ordinary people during peace time. Very few of us

ever come into contact with any of them, but when war occurs those Acts come into play and we come in contact with them day in and day out.

There is no provision in the Defence Act, the Navy Act or the Air Force Act enjoining any duty or placing any obligation at all on the State Government as a Government, or placing any obligation or vesting any power at all in the State Legislature. I agree that the Commonwealth Parliament could at any time put a section in any one of those Acts delegating to the State Legislature the right to legislate on certain matters relevant to the defence of the country, but the Commonwealth Parliament has not done that, and so far as defence is concerned the Government of Western Australia and the members of the Legislature have no more power and no more obligation than has the citizen in the street.

I do not think that fact is clearly understood by the man in the street. I do not think he quite realises, when he says, "Why does not the State Parliament do something?" that the State Parliament has no power to do anything. And if we can, we should make that plain to the people of Western Australia. When people go to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as their representative; when they come to me as the representative of the most vulnerable constituency in the State; when they go to other members and ask why cannot this be done and why cannot that be done; when members are asked why they cannot get the Western Australian Parliament to do something, they should have from some authoritative source a statement that Parliament is not in a position to do anything; and that they are equally entitled to say to the persons asking the question, "Why do you not do something, because you have the same power as Parliament?" If that were made plain to the public at large there would be a good deal less unfair criticism of members of Parliament.

In addition to the Acts, regulations are promulgated from time to time, coming down like rain in a tropical thunderstorm. They are issued so quickly that no person today is justified in giving an opinion as to what is the effect of a regulation, because the person advised may no sooner have got outside the door than there may be a new regulation hot off the Press in Canberra. People like myself who spend a large part of their time in seeking to

understand these regulations have to make this proviso when speaking to their clients : "This is the regulation so far but you must remember that there may be an amendment just off the Press in Canberra at the present time." People at large have a good deal to complain about in respect of the regulations. Ever since the war began, constituted authority seems to have been unable to make up its mind on certain things, with the result that a pile of regulations has been built up. We in Western Australia, particularly, suffer a special hardship in regard to these regulations.

On many occasions when one goes to the Commonwealth sub-department that sells the regulations and asks for a particular regulation, he is told, "We have not got that one, it has not yet reached Western Australia, but we can get it for you in 10 days or three weeks." The people of this outlying State are in the unfortunate position of operating under laws which do not come to their knowledge for up to three weeks after they have become operative. They suffer a worse disability than that. When a regulation is promulgated, a short summary is published in the daily newspaper. Frequently it is just a sketchy summary and it is unsafe for people to act on the strength of the summary, because when the regulation comes to hand it may be found to contain all sorts of conditions and provisos that are not set out at length in the summary.

Apart from the regulations that have been promulgated under the three particular Defence Acts, there was passed, when the war began, the all-embracing National Security Act, something on the lines of the Imperial Defence of the Realm Act, and under the National Security Act regulations have been promulgated relating to all sorts of individuals and all classes. I submit that a large mass of the regulations that have been issued under the National Security Act are *ultra vires*. It does not follow that, because the Federal Parliament vested in the Executive Council the right to make regulations for the security of the country in a time of war, it thereby gave the Executive Council *carte blanche* to abolish all the statutes on the statute-book and simply to say, "We are going to interfere in this whether it has anything to do with the war or not." As an illustration, the National Security Act does not empower the Federal executive to promulgate regulations fixing rents. It would take a wide stretch of language and an interpretation that even a

court that I am not allowed to mention would not be able to give in order to try to say that the alteration of a contractual agreement entered into between a landlord and his tenant is necessary for the defence of the country at the present time.

Mr. Watts : Not even with a member of the Forces ?

Mr. HUGHES : No, not even with a member of the Forces. I hope to show later that a lot of the restrictive regulations enacted for the benefit of members of the Forces frequently inflict hardship on people worse off than the members of the Forces concerned. Take the case of the regulations controlling rents. This is an illustration of how these restrictive regulations work injuriously against people, particularly poor people. A working man, a bricklayer, had purchased a war service home and had contracted to pay about £850 for it by weekly instalments over the agreed period. During the depression he got out of work and was unable to meet his commitments to the War Service Homes Board. The house was bought by instalments bearing interest at the usual percentage charged by this Department, and after 16 years this man has paid £420 in interest and has only reduced the principal by £37. In addition, he has paid the rates and taxes.

In order to relieve the situation, and in an endeavour to meet his commitments to the Commonwealth Government, he decided to get out of the house and live with some relative, and let his house to a tenant. What happened ? As soon as the tenant entered the premises he started to get in arrears with the rent. Although today this man is working as a bricklayer for his living, and although he has gone to the inconvenience of shifting out of the house, and his tenant is not paying the rent, he is in this position, that before he can do anything to evict the tenant, the tenant has to be 28 days in arrears with the rent.

Mr. J. Hegney : Is the tenant a soldier ?

Mr. HUGHES : No, a civilian. When the tenant is four weeks in arrears the working man concerned has to give him notice to quit. He has to give seven days notice for every six months that the tenant has been there plus seven days, so that if the tenant has been there 18 months he has to give 28 days notice. First of all the person is entitled to have the place rent free for four weeks, and then if a week is allowed for the tenant to get advice to ascertain his position, five weeks have elapsed, and then

four weeks' notice has to be given, which makes nine weeks. At the end of that time an application has to be lodged at the court to evict the tenant, and if the landlord gets a hearing within two weeks that is a reasonable time. That makes a total of 11 weeks, during which time the tenant can occupy the place rent free; and then he is not sure that he will get the tenant out. I know of several cases where people circumstanced like that have been told by the tenant, "You cannot put me out, and I will not pay the rent."

One may say it is necessary to give some protection to people with tenancies during the current period of the war, but here is the doubly hard task on the man in the position I have just outlined: Although the Federal Government, by statutory enactment, says, "You must let these people have your premises for 11 weeks rent free," he cannot go along to the War Service Homes Board and say, "I lost 11 weeks' rent because of the operations of the regulations made under the National Security Act, so I want you to write off 11 weeks' payments." No. He is held to his contract, and he has to find the contribution each week. If he does not find it he has to pay a penal rate of interest, which, I think, includes not only interest on the principal outstanding, but interest on the interest outstanding.

It is all very well to rush in and make regulations such as these, which cause considerable hardship. That is only one case of many which has come to my personal knowledge where the operation of rent restriction inflicts more hardship on the person concerned than the person to be protected. These regulations would be all right if they applied only to bona fide cases, but unfortunately, as they are drafted, they allow a person who does not want to meet his obligations, and who does want to take advantage of the regulations, to injure people worse off than himself by evading his liabilities. That is not a power vested in the Commonwealth of Australia under the National Security Act. That has no bearing on winning the war. I doubt very much if the regulations were limited to the dependants of men actually engaged in the Fighting Forces whether they would be a valid enactment under the defence power.

So, we have arrived at a new system. We are undergoing a transition stage at present, from the system we had before the war to a new one. Only one thing has

remained intact, and that the National Security regulations apparently will not interfere with and will not curtail or restrict. I refer to the power of the big financial institutions; the sacredness of money. That apparently is the only thing they cannot touch under the Constitution. I was very interested to hear the complaints of members of the Country Party concerning the hardships of farmers. I have no doubt that what they said about the disabilities and hardships being suffered by the farmers is true. During the last ten years there has been no need to go to Europe to find people suffering hardships and privations; we had them in our farming community. But what can we do for the farmers if they will not face the real cause of their trouble?

We have been told recently that we ought to set about growing our own vegetables because, as a result of war conditions, there is likely to be a shortage of those commodities. Being anxious to obey those in authority I planted some vegetables in the sands of East Perth. The soil there, I understand, is not as good as it is beyond the river, and I am not sure that some of my cabbages will not come up cauliflowers. Nevertheless, after hearing the mournful statement of the member for Avon about the position of the farmers, I am going home to pull them up. I am not going to work under those conditions. I have been a trade unionist ever since I was 14 years of age, when I became eligible to join a union, and if those are the conditions under which producers have to work, I do not propose to join the band. Whether I would be eligible to join them I do not know. Perhaps you could tell me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how many cabbages a man has to grow per annum before he is eligible to become a member of the Primary Producers' Association. I know that one cannot grow more than half-an-acre of potatoes without getting a permit from the member for South Fremantle—or is it onions?—or keep more than 50 fowls without the permission of the member for Canning. So one might find oneself face to face with a breach of the law through growing onions without the blessing of the member for Canning.

I think the farmers have a very real grievance. Whether this House can rectify it, I do not know, but it is one that ought to be rectified. Other sections of the community also have a grievance. If one

person's rights are interfered with by statutory enactment and that person is not released from the performance of his obligations, he gets squeezed, and much injustice and hardship can be and is being done. If farmers are told that they must reduce their acreage and production, I submit that there is only one fair way of dealing with the farmers. The moment they are told that their productive capacity must be reduced, and therefore the means of getting the wherewithal to discharge their obligations, every obligation they have should automatically be reduced to the same extent. For instance, a farmer might have a mortgage on his property, as I understand some of them have, or an overdraft at the bank. If he is paying 5 per cent. on his overdraft, the moment he is told that his acreage or production must be reduced by one-third, his interest should be reduced by one-third. If he is paying 6 per cent. interest on his overdraft, the rate should immediately be reduced to 4 per cent. If he has hired a vehicle under a hire-purchase contract, and is paying £1 10s. a week, the moment his productive power is reduced, there should be a reduction on his contract. He should receive a reduction not only on his current payments but also on all contracts and even rates and taxes. If we reduce a man's production capacity, the only fair thing to do is to release him correspondingly from his obligations.

It should go further than a readjustment of payments; it should go back to the principal. If a farmer borrowed money on his farm when wheat was at a high price, the very basis of the contract, from the angle of both the lender and borrower, was that a certain state of affairs existed and there was an implied condition that it would continue to exist. No man would have entered into a commitment had he been under the impression that something was going to supervene to prevent his meeting his obligations. No lender would have advanced money if he had felt something would intervene to prevent the borrower from discharging his debt. The farmers are heavy interest payers, and are heavily burdened with debt under contracts entered into when wheat was a much higher price than it is today. Notwithstanding that the capacity to produce the wherewithal to meet their obligations has been seriously affected, they have been called upon to stand up to their obligations, with the result that they are being squeezed to death.

They have been reduced to working under conditions under which nobody should be asked to work, and I should say that the last straw has been added when they were told they must reduce their output by one-third.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

I suggest to the Minister for Lands, if a metropolitan member is permitted to offer a suggestion on a farming question, that when he is making a recommendation to the Federal Government, he should seriously consider asking that where a farmer is called upon to reduce his output and thereby limit his capacity to earn the money to meet his obligations, he should immediately—not by approaching a tribunal and making out a case—be able to say to a creditor, "I owe you £20, but I can pay you only £13 6s. 8d. because my earning capacity has been reduced by one-third." That should not only apply to the traders with whom he is dealing but should go right back to the banks and the income tax commissioners. The farmer should be told, "If you cannot earn the money, you cannot pay." That is fundamental. If a superior force comes in and prevents him from earning it, still he cannot pay it. If the Minister for Lands is considering any proposition of that sort, I ask him to be careful of one thing. The authorities in the East might say, "We agree to that and will defer payment of one-third of the farmer's obligation." That, however, would merely be giving the farmer a sort of temporary respite which would only add to his burdens in the ultimate.

What sacrifice will the party to whom the obligation is due make if the debtor merely has to say, "For the period of the war"—be it two years or three years, or two or three months—"the farmer will be released from the discharge of a portion of his obligations"; but the moment the war is over, or else six months later, the whole of the farmer's obligations revive against him? That, of course, would be most unfair. It would not be an equitable adjustment. The argument must be followed to its logical conclusion. One cannot stop half way. One cannot say, "It is a good argument until it affects me." The question does not affect the farmer alone. Apparently farmers are the hardest people in the world to convince that there should be some adjustment of their mortgage debts. As soon as one starts the subject

of adjustment, the farmer's spokesmen shout, "Inflation." That old bogey is trotted out to induce the farmer to continue to bear his mortgage burden.

On my last holiday I met a friend from Boulder who had gone in for farming. He said it was a cruel thing to take away the farmer's mortgage; it was like taking the coat off his back. All his life had been centred on his mortgage. In a good year he paid some interest, and in a bad year he paid none. The farmer thought his industry could not function without mortgages. My friend added, "This accounts for the viewpoint of most of the Country Party members of Parliament. They are supposed to have been farmers, and they have got so used to mortgages and payment of interest that when a city member comes along and proposes to lift their mortgages off them, they think it is like taking the coats off their backs." The only Country Party member who has any views of the kind I advocate is not a farmer at all, but a lawyer. So one can talk to him about lifting mortgages. Subject to correction, the reason is that while the hon. member has not the mortgage complex, he, being a lawyer, has never had anything to mortgage.

In a book I have been reading quite recently, the question of inflation is dealt with. The member for Canning believes the war is nearly over. I am entitled to believe that there is no war at all in existence, because if I paid heed to the economics I was taught and the textbooks I read at the University, I would believe that a country bereft of its gold can do nothing but sit down and die. The moment there is a flight of gold from a country, that country resolves itself into its primary elements. I have good reason to believe that the German nation, drained of every ounce of gold it had, cannot find the materials to fight a war, and can do nothing but sit down and die of inanition. But, curiously enough, Germany, drained of gold as it was, did not sit down and die, but, proceeding to do the sensible thing, found another system of currency.

During the transition period Germany had what was known as inflation. Notwithstanding all that people say about inflation—it generally comes from people who are holders of mortgages and interest-bearing investments and who are interested to bring about deflation—I prefer inflation to deflation. I read in a book recently

that during the inflationary period in Germany farmers paid off the mortgages on their farms by selling six sheep. As a result they lost their mortgages; and they must have felt foolish for the time being, if they were anything like our farmers. However, they got used to it, and it did not take them long to devote to their own standard of living the money they formerly devoted to paying interest on mortgages. Unfortunately, before long the money was diverted to the purposes of aggression.

If there is to be a compulsory choice between inflation and deflation here, I am for inflation. I think we must be faced with that choice eventually, because natural science says, and so does political science, that a thing is never static, that it is either going forward or coming backward. When the static stage is reached, the stage of equilibrium has been reached, and that means death. Nothing that lives remains stationary, and so, particularly in a disturbed time, like war, we must go one way or the other. We must have either inflation or deflation. In this country we know something about deflation. We know from Germany that, notwithstanding the period of inflation, there was not one acre of land less in that country when the inflationary period ended than there was when it started, nor was there one item less of technical skill. We also know that the burden of interest was lifted from a large mass of the community, which led to the people being stampeded into a nation preparing for the intensive war in which it is at present engaged. Inflation is not such a bogey after all.

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: The creditor class suffered through it.

Mr. HUGHES: Yes, the creditors suffered. I admit that if we had inflation tomorrow we would reduce the income and standard of living of mortgagees. We would also reduce the standard of living of people who are lending money for the war effort. These have a fixed income and consequently, if inflation took place, would get fewer commodities for their money. Naturally, they would buy less and so would be affected. Therefore, are not the banks quite sane in saying, "Do not let us have inflation. Let us have deflation. Let us so arrange the purchasing power of our commodity that those with fixed incomes and those receiving interest can get more for their money than they did previously." The most sensible

way, without swinging too much one way or the other, is to make an equitable adjustment as between debtors and creditors. That is the best way out, although it will be difficult to ask a person who has something to give it up. I suggest that is the first remedy we can offer the farmer. The member for Irwin-Moore (Mr. Berry) referred to some cheap debt collector who had written to a farmer demanding that he should pay his account. I heartily endorse the hon. member's references to the cheap debt collector; I have no patience at all with such collectors, who step in and take the bread out of the toiler's mouth by doing legal work without charging for it.

All the charges the hon. member levelled at the cheap debt collector's head were thoroughly justified. But so far as the debtor is concerned, a great deal of hardship is being caused, particularly to the middle and lower-middle classes by the regulation which precludes creditors from collecting their debts. The creditor is frequently in the same position as is the unfortunate farmer. In the course of carrying on his business he has entered into obligations on the basis of normal trading; he has extended credit to people who asked for it but when the time arrives for him to collect the money from his debtor—frequently for no other purpose than to pay his own debts—he is precluded by law from getting his money; he is placed in a most invidious position. Unless the regulations go further, and provide that where a creditor is precluded from collecting his debts, he in turn will get relief from his own debts, we shall have a very inequitable state of affairs.

The same thing is happening in the city. Hire-purchase agreements are causing a great deal of hardship at the present time. We know that under the hire-purchase system people take commodities on hire, on condition that when they have paid a certain amount of rent the commodity becomes theirs. Frequently, the commodity does not become theirs until the day before the last instalment is due, when it is worn out and the owner must buy a new one. Under the system, the person who sells the commodity, the vendor, not being a person of great financial stability, gets an agreement from the hirer to pay by instalments, and that agreement is supported by promissory notes payable at stated periods. In order to carry on his business the vendor discounts the promissory notes

with a financial institution, but the institution always makes the vendor sign a guarantee that, if the hirer makes default in payment of the promissory notes, the intermediary, who is the vendor, must pay. Therefore, people who have been dealing in hire-purchase agreements find themselves in this position:

As a result of restrictive legislation they are unable to collect instalments from the hirer; but they, in turn, are bound to meet the obligation to the person who discounted the bills. Frequently, these have been discounted at a high rate of interest. Notwithstanding all the regulations, notwithstanding all the efforts made to limit rates of interest, hire-purchase commodities are sold on a basis of 12 to 12½ per cent. interest. Many people who have built up assets representing equities in hire-purchase agreements find themselves unable to collect the hire from the hirer; but, as I have said, they are obliged to meet their commitments with the finance and discount companies, with the result that they are being ruined. Surely, if we are to have an equitable distribution of the war's burden, we ought to extend to that intermediary class the relief which we are giving to the hirer. I have no great brief for the people who trade in hire-purchase agreements, because, as a rule, everything is in their favour. The contract is designed to give 100 per cent. protection to the vendor. The legislation we have passed has not given much protection to the hirer.

Some people are getting a most unfair deal as the result of this restrictive legislation. In my opinion, the Government should, as part of the war legislation, seriously consider some amendment to the law governing hire-purchase agreements, and give the people concerned the relief of which I speak. We should go right back to the fountain head, and say, "If 'A' is not allowed to collect his hire instalments from 'B,' then 'A' shall be relieved of payment of his debts to 'C,' and 'C' to 'D,' and so on." So that instead of a partial moratorium everybody is placed in the same position. The same thing applies to mortgagees and mortgagors. Take the mortgagor who is in the unfortunate position at the present time of not being able to meet his mortgage commitments. If the mortgagee calls up the mortgage, as a result of the restrictions of trading in property, the number of buyers in the field is limited

and so the mortgagee frequently is the only buyer in the market and obtains the property for the mortgage value.

To give a concrete illustration of the disability that mortgagors are suffering at the present time: There was a property near Fremantle that was 18 months old. It cost £950 to build and the land cost £100. It was purchased by a working man on the basis that he gave his land as security and was to pay for the balance by instalments to a first and second mortgagee. He got into difficulty and was unable to meet his commitments, and an order was made for the sale of the mortgaged property. At that time property was selling well. Every day one could see in the paper advertisements, frequently inserted by evacuees, for houses. I told this man, "Fortunately for you I think you will get a price for your house that will clear the first and second mortgages and restore to you some of your own equity." Two days before the sale a statement came from Mr. Curtin in Canberra enumerating nine points. One was a restriction on the sale of property. The regulations were not in Western Australia. I do not think they had been drafted, or if they had, they were not promulgated.

I immediately saw that nobody would go to the sale and bid because people would have seen in the "West Australian" of two days previously that people were not going to be allowed to transfer property—just that bald statement. The consequence was that when the sale took place there was only one legitimate bidder and that was the first mortgagee, and of course he bid only sufficient to clear his own mortgage. The second mortgagee came in and went up to £800, so he got the property at that figure, although it was worth £1,050. Not that he wanted it, but he had to go in to protect his own equity from the first mortgagee. The net result is that the workman concerned has lost his equity in the house and owes the second mortgagee the difference between the amount of the second mortgage and the amount of the first mortgage, less a few pounds that were left over.

That is going on every day. If members look in the papers for the last few days they will see that the banks have put in a liquidator in respect of a certain company, and are calling tenders for the purchase of the whole of the assets of the company, which include equities in a lot of hire purchase

agreements, a lot of stock, equipment, and so forth, valued at not a penny less than £30,000. One shareholder of this company that I know is a man living on a pension of £1 a week. He has an interest in the company to the extent of £100 or £200. It is practically all he has.

As a result of the restrictive regulations, the banks have gone to people with overdrafts and asked them to reduce their overdraft limits, and where a man has had an overdraft limit and has not been working right up to the limit they have cut off the difference and so there are no bidders in the market. Nobody could go to the banks and get £30,000 to buy this property and save the shareholders' equity. There will be only one bidder in the market and that is the bank that has the mortgage, and it will buy the property for £20,000, which is the amount of the mortgage. Not only has credit been cut off to preclude other people from coming in, but a company could not be formed. If a number of people got together and said, "We will find £30,000 to buy these people out," they would not be allowed to register a company. It is making a Roman holiday for the big financial institutions.

A particularly cruel aspect of this restriction on credit is this: If a man is enterprising and has put his money into an industry in Western Australia, if he has built up a factory and has had an overdraft of £7,000 limit and has only been using £4,000, the bank says, "You do not want that £3,000." So that is cut off and he is limited to the £4,000 that he has been using, and he is told he is doing that to assist the war effort. On the other hand, a man who has not bothered to put his money into an enterprise, who has just been content to place it in the bank, can draw the full amount. Those people who have not been enterprising but have been sitting back looking for a secure return for their money, and have credits at the bank, have not had their purchasing power affected in the slightest, and they are in the happy position of perhaps being able to take advantage of this £10,000 worth of property that is going west in two or three days' time. I think I will take the responsibility of recommending to any member with £30,000 credit in the bank the purchase of this property, for he would not go wrong.

The net result is that the only bidder in the market will be the bank with the mort-

gage, so the regulations are making a Roman holiday for big financial institutions. If the war continues the rich will get richer and the poor will be poorer. Notwithstanding all the talk about a new order and about our not doing this time what was done last time, that will be the net result of these regulations. If a man has £1,000 in the bank and it is wanted for war purposes, for some enterprise that is essential to the community I cannot understand why the Government does not say, "We want that money," and take it. The people in my electorate are not asked whether they will do this and whether they will do that. One of my electors is a single man who was earning £7 a week. He was called up under Section 60 of the Defence Act and told he must go into camp. He did so. He works 24 hours a day, and must do as he is told, and he gets 5s. a day. So he is already penalised to the extent of from £4 to £5 a week. His earning capacity is cut off and he is told that that is necessary for the defence of the country. That is a very good reason, too. Why should we go to the man on the bottom rung of the ladder? Why should we say to him, "You have to give up your earning capacity of £5 a week," and say to another man, "If you have something we want, we will not take it from you." One of the greatest travesties of this war is the suggestion that there is equality of sacrifice.

The point was made that farmers did not get overtime like the munitions workers. They are not the only ones who do not get overtime. The soldier who is put into camp does not get any overtime, and he is a 24-hour a day man. The only equitable way to deal with that is this: When a man is put into camp he should be paid the same wages as he was earning in private life. He should not be called upon to make the double sacrifice of having a 24-hour a day job at about one-fifth of his wages. If he had been earning £2,000 a year, he should be paid that amount.

Mr. Marshall: It would be an expensive army.

Mr. HUGHES: Yes, it would.

Mr. J. Hegney: Has your time yet to come?

Mr. HUGHES: Yes. The munitions worker has no compunction in saying, "If I work four hours extra I want four hours' extra pay." Is he any more a unit in the

defence of Australia than is the soldier called into camp? I would be quite prepared to say, while the war is on, that everybody should be on military rates of pay. If everybody in the community were allowed the same rate of pay as the soldier, that is, 5s. a day plus allowances for his wife and children, then there would be something in the suggestion that there is equality of sacrifice.

The question of the trading in hotels has frequently been mentioned in this debate. I do not propose to labour the question of the hours during which people should drink, or whether they should or should not drink. But I do know this, that there again a particularly inequitable system has been instituted. A large number of lessees of hotels entered into their contracts and paid a large ingoing and contracted to pay a big rent. They did that on one public, or admitted basis, and one agreed basis. First of all the law allowed them to sell from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., but custom allowed them to sell after 9 p.m., and also on Sundays. The amount of the ingoing and rent for a hotel was based on the total takings of the legal trading, plus illegal trading, because the illegal trading had been sanctified by use. Everybody who bought a hotel knew very well that the takings shown for Saturday included those for Sunday, and frequently Sunday was the best day in the week. On that basis, contractual obligations were entered into. The war came along and we now have restriction in hotel trading.

The first thing the Federal Government said was, "The sale of liquor must be reduced by one-third." It did not go on and say, "The rent is to be reduced by one-third and the ingoing reduced by one-third, and refunded if necessary." The unfortunate hotel keeper has had to bear an unfair burden. He has had to stand up to the obligations he undertook but has had the means of discharging them taken from him. The State Government should tackle this problem. It should bring down an amendment to the Licensing Act to relieve these hotel lessees of their obligations to the same extent as their trading has been restricted, because they have been restricted in two ways. First of all, there has been the sudden enforcement of the licensing law which has lasted now for several days in the city. The member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith) is quite wrong if he deduces that

drinking has not been diminished because there have been more prosecutions for drunkenness.

Mr. J. H. Smith: We have to go on results.

Mr. HUGHES: If the hon. member does not happen to have further information, of course he must go on results. When police officers used to go round to the hotel keepers and say, "It will be all right for you to trade on Sunday; we will not be about," it was a rare thing to see a person prosecuted for drunkenness. The only chance of being prosecuted for drunkenness three weeks ago was to threaten a policeman. If a man simply got drunk and did not fall down and stop a tram or something, he would not be arrested or prosecuted for drunkenness. But when the agitation about excessive drinking commenced, the police got a move on. One night on the stroke of six, five or six policemen in a motor car pulled up outside the United Service Hotel. I thought they were going in to have a drink, but that when they saw me they regarded me as a "nark" and would not go inside. I found out afterwards, however, that they were there to pick up anyone under the influence of drink. They gathered them in from all directions, and as many as fifty were presented in court in one day.

But it would be wrong to deduce from those excess prosecutions that drinking had not been diminished by the restricted hours of trading. We might as well say this: If there was an agitation against S.P. shops, and the police decided tomorrow that when they went to an S.P. shop they would arrest everybody in it, as they have the right to do, and as they do today when it is a Chinese gambling den, they could charge fifty or sixty people each week with being found in a common gaming house. It would be very wrong to deduce from those figures that gambling had increased. All that would have happened would have been that the activity of the police in enforcing the law had increased.

Having concluded my opening remarks, Mr. Speaker, I find the clock is running very heavily against me. I have heard people criticised for going on strike. I do not know that people sometimes are not entitled to go on strike. In my opinion—and it was not formed yesterday or today—the strike is the last and only weapon the working class has to get justice. I was associated with strikes when they were unlawful. I

say this, "What else can the working class do if it cannot get redress for its legitimate grievances?" I would suggest to the farmers that, instead of always complaining about industrial workers going on strike to get improvements in their conditions——

Point of Order.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: On a point of order! I believe we are not complying with the law. The windows of the House are not blacked out and already it is dark outside.

Mr. Speaker: All I know is that we decided to sit certain hours and carry on as may be necessary. We must carry on until the adjournment of the House is moved.

Debate Resumed.

Mr. HUGHES: I hope we shall have light even if we have a black-out. It is all very well to condemn the workers for going on strike, but they have no other remedy. If they cannot get redress, that is the final remedy. Perhaps if other sections of the community adopted a more militant attitude, they would fare better. They might say, "We are working in the interests of the community and doing our share to produce the requirements of the community, and are entitled to be treated as human beings. We want a decent standard of living and have united to that end." Then they would get much further than they do by throwing stones at the ones who have been forced to adopt that method.

I do not suggest that a strike is something to be lightly entered upon. Anyone who has been concerned in helping to feed the people affected by a strike know from experience that a strike is the last resort. It is only to be undertaken when all other remedies fail. Nevertheless, it is the only weapon the workers have finally got in order to secure justice. I do not think there has been a great number of frivolous strikes in Australia. The Australian worker does not go out on strike for fun, because he knows that when he strikes his weekly earnings for the maintenance of his wife and family are cut off.

(At this stage the lights went out.)

Mr. SPEAKER: I order that the lights be put on immediately.

Mr. HUGHES: The matter of entering upon a strike is always carefully considered before a strike is declared. A lot of people say to the workers, "You should not go

on strike, no matter what the conditions are. You should submit yourselves to the ponderous and slow-moving legal tribunals." Those people frequently forget how long it takes to get redress, and that the tribunals are not at liberty to do what they think is just. They are frequently bound by legal enactments and have no more authority than the right to interpret those enactments as they find them. People should ask, "Why do they have to go on strike?" If the farmers of Western Australia went on strike tomorrow and said, "We are striking because we are performing a laborious task for the benefit of the community, and are not getting adequate remuneration for it, and we are overburdened with debt and obligations, and cannot get redress," they might get somewhere.

Mr. J. Hegney: I think we will have to go on strike now!

Mr. HUGHES: Then the hon. member should do so.

Mr. Marshall: You might find a number of scabs.

Mr. HUGHES: It seems that reason does not always prevail, and frequently force has to take the place of reason. The workers, to make themselves heard, often have to resort to force. Who would blame them for taking the steps available to them to make themselves heard?

Much has been said to the effect that people must work harder and do this, that, or the other for the war effort. If one holds the view that when there is a war, certain people are saddled with the task of carrying out the war effort, others might do a very good job by doing nothing, keeping out of the way of those who are doing the work. A considerable amount of the time of those doing war work must be devoted to dealing with the people who want to rush in and do something. I cannot see any use in rushing in to do something merely for the sake of doing it. It needs to be part of a co-ordinated plan directed to some end that will lead to the advancement of the war effort and fit in with other things being done. Otherwise one might as well do nothing. It is like the man who comes along when one is in trouble with one's motor. The man grabs the shovel and axe and causes the car to sink in another couple of feet and then leaves. The best thing he could have done was to have refrained from interfering. The present war has been a great opportunity for nonentities to become celebrities.

Nonentities have frequently invested themselves with power and, curiously enough, their dictum is always what the other fellow should do. I feel impelled to define "patriotism" as I see it. With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall say that patriotism is the rule of conduct that one lays down for the other fellow. Under the Defence Act there is ample power in the Commonwealth Government to call up all male inhabitants of Australia to the age of 60 years. Therefore I take it that if the Commonwealth Government knows the Australian people, it will exercise that power and let us know what it wishes us to do. If we are all going to tear round saying we want to do this and we want to do that to help the war, the position will become chaotic. On two occasions we have filled in census cards, on which we were asked to state what we could do apart from the particular calling that we were following. That information, I understand, is all collated; and the military authorities can call upon those of us who want to serve.

Recently there appeared in the Press a letter from Air Commander de la Rue, in which he attempted to refute an allegation that one could not get into the Air Force unless one was a wearer of the old school tie. I have heard that statement made repeatedly. Indeed, I made it myself three days before Commander de la Rue wrote his letter. I did not make my statement except as the result of some observations. I think I have seen as much of the inside of the Air Force as anyone else in the community who is not actually a member of that force. First of all some person had written to the paper saying he was perplexed. He did not give his name, and he would not give his name, because unfortunately experience has taught people that if a man exercises his right of criticism and makes statements unpalatable to those in authority he may be victimised.

Mr. Abbott: Does the hon. member suggest that the man would be victimised as a civilian?

Mr. HUGHES: The whirligig of time might find the man in the Air Force, and he might be victimised. I know some of the things that go on in the Air Force, and I can state that there are in the Air Force some pretty domineering gentlemen. I have seen those gentlemen in operation.

Mr. Abbott: From the back door!

Mr. HUGHES: From the inside of a court martial, and on more than one occa-

sion. Notwithstanding the interjections of the hon. member, I saw some of the officers in their true colours.

Leave to Continue.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK—Geraldton) [8.49]: In view of the lateness of the hour, and of the fact that we are breaking all the regulations we have made, I move—

That the hon. member be granted leave to continue his speech at the next sitting.

Motion put and passed.

House adjourned at 6.50 p.m.

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 21st April, 1912.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 11 a.m., and read prayers.

MOTION—PARLIAMENTARY ADVISORY COMMITTEES.

HON. H. L. ROCHE (South-East) [11.5]: I move—

That, in the opinion of this House, eight committees should immediately be appointed to inquire into and report upon, and, where advisable, organise for the carrying out of any proposal

(a) referred to such committee by the Minister; or

(b) decided upon by a two-thirds majority of the members present at a meeting of the committee.

Each such committee to be related to one of the eight Cabinet Ministers and its powers to be in respect of the matters connected with his department, and to consist of three members of the Legislative Council and five members of the Legislative Assembly, and be proportionately representative of all parties as nearly as possible. A majority of members of a committee to form a quorum and a meet-

ing of any such committee to be convened by notice signed by any three members of the committee or by the Minister.

I have brought forward this motion with a view to obtaining an expression of opinion on it from members, and with the desire to ascertain whether it appeals wholly or in part to them. It will also serve as an expression of opinion by private members to the Government that we desire Ministers to make greater use of our services in some form or other than has been possible up to the present. It can truly be said of every member of Parliament, certainly of every member of this House, that he is anxious to do more than he is now doing to assist in this time of crisis. The Premier, in the letter he addressed to members, complimented them upon the work they were doing; but I think it must be recognised that, before private members can render effective assistance, they must have some status. Some arrangement must be made to permit of the co-ordination of their efforts. The proposal is one that is only feasible if it meets with the full approval of the Government itself and I hope that approval will be forthcoming. There is no intention in any way to usurp the responsibilities of the Ministers, who would be in complete control; but the proposed committees could, in my opinion, function effectively and usefully in an advisory capacity. At present I understand members representing the North-West of the State hold meetings, and presumably they find those meetings are for the good of the people whom they represent.

Private members could, if these proposed committees were formed, contribute to the welfare of the State along similar lines. The many duties that Ministers have to discharge and the fact that permanent officials of the Public Service are fully engaged, seem to me to militate against the ability of Ministers thoroughly to investigate the problems that arise from time to time. Many of those problems are new; many of them arise as a result of the war and the position in which we find ourselves in consequence. These are the problems that could be investigated by the proposed advisory committees. I do not suggest that publicity should be given to the members of the committee; that is a matter which should be left entirely to the Government. Individual members of the committee should not be