

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 11th August, 1936.

	PAGE
Question: State Batteries	14
Federal Senate vacancy: Lieut.-Governor's Message	14
Address-in-reply, second day	14

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

QUESTION—STATE BATTERIES.

Hon. H. SEDDON (for Hon. C. G. Elliott) asked the Chief Secretary: 1, What were the total working expenses of State batteries during the year ended the 30th June, 1936? 2, What was the total revenue for the same period? 3, What was the profit received from operations during that period?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, £113,642 12s. 7d. 2, 126,297 16s. 8d. 3, £12,635 4s. 1d. This amount has been completely absorbed in the payment of cartage subsidies on prospectors' ore carted to State batteries.

FEDERAL SENATE VACANCY.

Lieut.-Governor's Message.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read transmitting a copy of a despatch received by him from the President of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Australia, notifying that a vacancy had occurred in the representation of the State of Western Australia in the Senate, Senator W. Carroll having died on the 13th May, 1936.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, ordered: That the President be requested to confer with the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in order to fix a day and place whereon and whereat the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly, sitting and voting together, shall choose a person to hold the place of the Senator whose place has become vacant.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Second Day.

Debate resumed from the 6th August.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East) [4.45]: Before dealing with matters contained in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech I wish to make a

few references to other matters of importance. The most important of all is the death of His Majesty King George V. Only about 12 months have elapsed since we celebrated the 25th anniversary of his reign over Great Britain and the Dominions. That period contained many years that were fraught with extreme danger, but His Majesty King George was always equal to the task that confronted him and proved himself a very worthy leader of the British Nation. It was he who in a large degree assisted to surmount many of the difficulties that arose between Great Britain and other countries of the world. Unfortunately, a few months ago he was taken ill, and soon the whole nation mourned the loss of a beloved ruler who showed consideration for the whole of his subjects. Great though that loss has been, the British nation has been very fortunate in having King Edward VIII. to fill the place, a young, energetic and good king who has taken every opportunity to make himself acquainted with his subjects, even those residing in the most remote parts of the Dominions. Although the present hour is very dark, let us hope that the darkness will be swept away and that King Edward's reign will be as successful as that of his late father. It is comforting to witness the trend in European affairs towards the lead given by Great Britain. The success of constitutional government in Great Britain has been so great that even Russia is inclined to turn that way. Let us hope that the blackness of the outlook at present will gradually pass and that constitutional government will be adopted by all countries in Europe to cement relations and bring peace instead of strife. Australia is fortunate in having the protection of the Mother Country. I fear that a very small minority of Australians do not fully realise what that protection means. The young men have not responded to the call of the military authorities for voluntary enlistment as was expected. I think it a pity that compulsory training was set aside several years ago, thus necessitating Australia's relying upon the voluntary system. I realise that anything of a compulsory nature is not favoured by many Australians, but many of our youths who trained under the compulsory system were better in health and physique than they have been since being allowed to go their own way. Not many months have elapsed since the close of the previous

session, but those few months have been marked by the loss of no fewer than five ex-members of the Legislative Council. First and foremost let me mention the late Sir Edward Wittenoom, who served the State for many years. He was truly an Empire builder, having been one of the leaders of the section that made Western Australia what it is to-day, a State of which we are all very proud. His was a conspicuous career on account of the varied concerns with which he was associated, and all those activities reflected his wonderful ability. He served in both Houses of Parliament with credit to himself and special benefit to the State. As a Minister of the Crown, he played a very important part in the early history of the State. He was a born diplomat and his term as Agent-General was most successful. His able and pleasing manner of speech, aided by ready wit, endeared him to all his associates. He gave great encouragement to fellow members and on all occasions took special pleasure in assisting new members. While it is pleasing to recall his pleasant speech, it is still more pleasant to remember his careful avoidance of many harmful things, which he preferred to leave unsaid. Memories of Sir Edward Wittenoom will be treasured by all with whom he was associated; we miss his cheery and helpful personality greatly. The late Sir Charles Nathan served as a member of this Chamber for a number of years. Previous to entering Parliament he served very diligently in various spheres. His combination of sincerity of purpose and ability, together with his congenial nature, endeared him to all with whom he came into contact and enabled him to render special and splendid service to the country. His ability was well displayed in this Chamber and his retirement was a matter for widespread regret. Sir Charles Nathan never indulged in destructive criticism. All his efforts were of a helpful and constructive nature, and those who enjoyed the privilege of his friendship feel the loss of a kind and sincere man. Mention has already been made in the motion moved by the Chief Secretary this afternoon of the death of an ex-member of this House in the person of Senator Carroll. He served a few years in this Chamber previous to becoming a member of the Senate. Senator Carroll had a wide and varied experience, and wherever he went he was respected. He spent a large part of his life on the land—strenuous

years which undermined his health. Later he represented a big organisation in this Chamber and proved himself a very useful member. Finally, on being defeated, he was elected to the Senate where he did yeoman service on behalf of this State so long as his health lasted. Every member who was associated with Senator Carroll will regret that he did not enjoy better health and that many more years were not spared him to carry out his useful representation of the State in the Federal Parliament. The late William Patrick was a member of this House for about 12 years. He was a man of the highest integrity. Concise of speech, he always spoke to the point and was reliable in his statements. He was honoured and respected by every member. He came of a family who had been attached to the land for generations, and members of his family are still engaged in producing commodities from the land. Such people are a valuable asset to any country. When Mr. William Patrick retired from this House we all felt that we had sustained a great loss—the loss of a gentleman honest to a degree and always dependable. The late Joseph Duffell represented the Metropolitan-Suburban Province in this House for a number of years. He had been a commercial man in the city and proved a very useful member. He served a term here when conditions were very difficult and he always displayed an amount of commercial ability that was very helpful to us. During the recess we have suffered other losses, due to the elections and, of course, there have been gains. I am referring to Mr. R. G. Moore, who was defeated for North-East Province, and Mr. H. J. Yelland who was defeated for East Province. Mr. R. G. Moore was not with us for many years, but during the period he served here, he showed marked ability and honesty of purpose and all that went to make a true man. He gained the respect of members and performed very useful service for the people of the gold-fields. Mr. Yelland, a colleague of mine, sat for two terms amounting to 12 years and worked very diligently on behalf of his constituents. The electors, however, decided to make a change and Mr. Yelland is not with us to-day. No matter what political opinions we may hold, there is always a feeling of friendship that causes sadness when any member is defeated at an election. We are pleased to welcome the two new members, one a colleague of mine in the person of Mr. Garnet Wood. He comes of an old

Western Australian family, his father having left a very distinct mark on the political life of the State. He served as a Minister of the Crown with marked ability and also as Commissioner of Railways, and it will be a long time before the name of B. C. Wood is forgotten in Western Australia. From my experience of Mr. Garnet Wood, I can say he is a worthy son following a good father, and he too, I believe, will prove as great a credit to the State. Mr. Eric Heenan, the other new member, I have known from boyhood; in fact, I know the whole family. Mr. Heenan is a member of the legal profession of which he has proved a shining light. He has shown himself to be adaptable and very thorough in everything he undertakes, and he will make a very good member. His parents were exceptional people; their whole lives were devoted to the advancement of the family to which end they were prepared to make any sacrifice. As a friend of his mother, I regret that she was not spared a little longer to witness the honour conferred upon her son by his election to this House. Judging by his concise utterance in moving the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply, Mr. Heenan will prove of great assistance to the House.

References have recently been made to Australia's trade and on this question Western Australia is affected closely indeed, particularly in respect of exports. I am afraid there are a lot of people all over the Commonwealth who do not value the trade that this country does with Great Britain. I have already spoken on the subject of the importance of our trade with Great Britain from the standpoint of Australia's protection. We know how loyal Great Britain is to her Dominions and we are also aware that that loyalty is cordially reciprocated from this end, so much so that Great Britain's devotion to her colonies might be said to be similar to that of a parent to a child. But, as I have said, there are people who place no value on the trade we do with the Mother Country. Quite recently there has been a controversy on the question of the wool trade. After all, we in Australia are part and parcel of the British Empire and it should be our duty first of all to give consideration to the Mother Country. When it comes to an exchange of trade, however, it is interesting to note just how much trade we carry on with Great Britain, and the ex-

tent of our trade with other countries of the world. It is obviously to our advantage that our trade with Great Britain should be considerably greater than our trade with outside countries. I have not the exact figures but I know that for the year 1930 our trade with America totalled no less a sum than 25 millions against Australia. We are aware, however, that this has been considerably curtailed by reason of the fact that many articles are now manufactured in Australia. But let me quote a few figures relating to our primary industries upon which Australia has to depend to a material extent for her credits abroad. We find thus that our trade with Great Britain now is greater than our trade with other countries combined. During the last 12 months Western Australia's exports to Great Britain totalled over £5,000,000, as against slightly over £3,000,000 to other countries of the world. I will quote a few of the principal items. Take our wheat. We exported to the United Kingdom wheat to the value of £1,838,070 and to all other countries £965,288 worth. Of flour we exported to the United Kingdom £158,012 and to other countries £327,887 worth. The value of greasy wool exported to the United Kingdom was £2,796,034 and to other countries £1,650,982. The value of scoured wool exported to the United Kingdom was £166,905 and to other countries £58,815. Apples were exported to the value of £267,223 to the United Kingdom, and £124,688 to other countries. So we have a total value of exports to Great Britain of £5,226,254 and to other countries £3,127,630. Surely those people who are interested in our trade will realise just how important that trade is with Great Britain, and it has to be borne in mind also that the figures relating to wheat deal with export in a year when our harvests were very low. I should like to make a brief reference to the elections that took place at the beginning of the present year. The previous election, held in 1930, was practically compulsory by reason of the fact that a referendum was conducted at the same time. The recent election was most marked by the apathy of electors in recording their votes. This showed clearly that a substantial percentage of electors do not value the privilege of the franchise. It is quite probable that the class of people who continually criticise and belittle both Parliament as a whole and Par-

liamentarians, are to be found amongst those who shirk the responsibility of recording their votes. As regards the votes of young people generally, the position is deplorable. The present is an age of pleasure as far as they are concerned. Very few take matters seriously and do not place any value on the vote. Any movement to politically educate the young people has made very little progress mainly because such movements were inaugurated for party advancement and, consequently, those taking part were coached on biased party lines. The Electoral Act is the most important statute because under it the Governments which are created not only control administration but the everyday life of the people, many of whom are more than careful over minor details affecting them and give no consideration to the proper exercise of their votes. Recently I heard a wireless discussion in which one person ridiculed politicians—and this is indulged in by many ignorant people who, when asked the name of the member for Perth, are unable to answer the question. The political education of the people is a real necessity. Instead, however, we find at times not only those who wish to climb into positions by forming new organisations, and others using existing bodies to advance their own selfish interests, but school teachers who are in the position to sow the seeds of discontent in young minds—and even worse still University professors—ever ready to malign politicians instead of assisting to educate the masses on sound politics. The apathy of electors in not recording their votes is serious, and whilst I am at all times very strongly opposed to any laws of a compulsory nature, because I consider that people should as far as possible be free agents, the neglect of such a large percentage of electors to record their votes at the last Assembly elections impels me to favour strongly compulsory voting. I hope that Parliament will have an early opportunity of considering this question.

In addition to the many avenues in which the taxpayer is forced to contribute to Government and public bodies funds through taxation and rates, appeals are often launched to collect money for other purposes. Some time back a successful appeal was made under the title of Youth and Motherhood, to which the Government and the people subscribed. As regards the motherhood section, it was a very worthy appeal and the funds could be used to good

purpose. It is quite apparent that when the appeal was made to assist youth, no avenue was known in which the funds could be used to advantage, and although every effort has been made, even now there is no known avenue through which to utilise the money. Why was such an appeal made? What influenced such an appeal? It was unfair to ask people to subscribe funds unless there was an avenue for utilisation, and the custodian of public funds, the Government, should have been assured of how the funds were to be applied before they subscribed public moneys. No effort should be spared to safeguard the most important years of life, i.e., from 14 to 21 years. During this period the greatest impressions are made and character moulded. Unemployment during this time of young life is a menace within our ranks and fosters idleness and vices which undermine character and create undesirables. There are some institutions assisting the movement, among which are several boys' farms, the result of which does not mean very much, because collectively they can only handle a few youths, and this method would be far too costly to extend to a sufficient number to meet the position. Other countries and also the other States of the Commonwealth are much more advanced than is Western Australia. A lot has been said in this State but very little accomplished. New South Wales recently granted £24,400 to its Youth Movement; previous to this another amount of £20,000 had been granted. Victoria has ten Government officials to handle this movement, and last year made a special grant of £2,500 and provided all petty services. Queensland has a special section of a department wholly devoted to the movement, and in addition to providing free fares to and from work, grants are given to youth movements. If the Western Australian Youth movement were handled in the same way as is done in Tasmania, the movement here would receive £40,000. South Africa has 12 branches in 12 of the largest towns, and the cost of the movement there is £20,000 per annum. In Western Australia we have a Boys Employment League, a very high-sounding name, but unfortunately placed. It occupies a large room which is only comparable to a Dutch farm barn and its furniture consists of one long table, a few chairs and a long form to accommodate lads awaiting employment. Everything that is discussed by word of mouth or over the

telephone is heard by all. The matter for the post is carefully placed on the floor to prevent its being mixed up with other papers. The staff consists of two paid officers, and such payments are less than those received by plumbers, while the typists are all volunteers. This system was commenced in January, 1932. The total income received amounts to £1,184, and the total expenditure to £1,115, and whilst large amounts have been provided out of Lottery funds for boys' farms, the total amount received from the Lotteries Commission to date is only £380. Notwithstanding the success of this institution, the Government have provided only £100 out of the total of £1,184. The result of starving the Boys' Employment League for funds has seriously hampered their operations. I happened to visit the league when requiring a lad, and overheard it said that they could not afford to send a telegram to a prospective employer. It is quite plain that employers cannot be advised by telegram that boys are being sent. This must cause inconvenience and many other drawbacks. Yet with all those drawbacks, the league has found positions for 7,100 boys at a cost of £1,115—a wonderful achievement worthy of practical assistance and encouragement. The average cost of placement of boys works out at the small sum of 3s. 1½d. each. Has any better avenue been found for the utilisation of a small portion of the Youth Appeal fund, which is lying idle? Surely this league is more entitled to a much larger share of the considerable amounts that are distributed frequently from Lotteries Commission funds than are many other concerns which have received extraordinary assistance! The future of Youth is every citizen's concern, and no effort should be spared to meet the position. For a long period of years there have been strong advocates of decentralisation, but it is quite apparent that such efforts have attained little success. The extension of the metropolitan area, when compared with the excess of exports over imports, does not appear warranted. In this connection it must not be overlooked that Western Australia has practically no secondary industries to export their products to be of much value to the State. But I wish to draw attention to what is being carried out in the metropolitan area, whilst other portions of the State are neglected. Our present educational system, costing approximately £700,000 per annum for a popula-

tion of less than half a million, is a very heavy burden to carry; yet even with that expenditure some country children are not receiving any benefits, and when requests are made on their behalf, the same old answer is given—"No funds." There are no funds for the country children, but £80,000 can be found to provide a palatial building, provided with every luxury, for a special school for girls in the city. Again, large sums are being expended on the additional water supply and sewerage extensions throughout the metropolitan area, whilst money is not available to provide additional country water supplies, an absolute necessity to enable producers to speed up their exports. The money expended in providing further water supplies to the city will certainly return interest, but this will be internal money, and such expenditure will not appreciate exports, on which, after all, the people and the State exist. Money is to be found for more luxurious transport for city residents for whom facilities are already provided. Perth and its surroundings are being improved to provide further luxuries and to beautify the river, over which span two impoverished bridges, one almost useless for any but the lightest traffic, and so restricting the use of the main road which it serves. A very creditable pleasure resort has been provided at Yanchep, almost at the gate of the city, whilst the State has a natural pleasure resort which, if available, would draw visitors from beyond the State and would be of inestimable value in bringing Western Australia before those people. I refer to the Yallingup Caves district, a beautiful holiday resort, and really a second Victoria Falls situation, lacking in wonderful falls certainly, but well compensated in that it has the ocean with its beneficial breezes, as against the humid atmosphere in Rhodesia. In addition, there are the ocean bathing, the splendid fishing waters, the beautiful caves and a truly delightful climate. Nature has provided a wonderful asset in Yallingup, and, with the expenditure of a reasonable sum, say £30,000, a suitable building could be erected, together with golf links and other facilities necessary to attract visitors and provide for Eastern States' people in search of health and pleasure. This proposition would be very profitable, for in addition to bringing more money to the State per medium of visitors it would be a splendid advertisement for our wonderful South-West land.

Now I come to the very serious position of our main primary industry, which has shown so great a reduction in yield. After years of ruinous prices for wheat, it is gratifying to note the present values which, according to reports, are likely to hold. Also it is of great interest to know that this season's growth of crops so far is good. It is to be hoped the State will have the benefit of a good season, those for a number of years past having been so bad for the wheatgrower, and consequently for the State. Even with fair seasons and good prices, it would take the average farmer eight years to recover from his losses of the past. The yields have fallen from the maximum of 53,000,000 bushels to 23,000,000 bushels, thus seriously affecting the State. Yet people are frequently found who, notwithstanding the benefits they receive from the wheat produced, continually refer to the farmers as grumblers. Those people I allude to enjoy regular incomes and, being in such a position, never give a thought to the fact that for years past many producers have been unable to procure the necessities to keep them in good health and fit for the arduous work which both the producers themselves and their womenfolk have to undertake daily. The production and export of wheat circulates more money than does any other industry, and the heavy drop in the State yield has had a serious effect on all finance and, in addition, has considerably increased unemployment. All producers have long been sacrificed to the Australian policy of protecting industry and extending all the advantages to all sections. This naturally is reflected in very high costs for everything required, whilst other countries, with which the Australian producer has had to compete on the world's market, enjoy cheaper costs for goods, labour, etc. The evil of the position lies in the fact that producers have to supply their products to the sheltered classes of Australia at the same price as is received for export in competition with countries where production costs are much lower. No producer will deny other classes the many privileges, provided reasonable treatment is returned. There is only one remedy, and the sooner it is adopted, the better for Australia; I mean that a reasonable price comparable with cost of production must be provided for all produce for local consumption, otherwise the producing industries will fail to send the necessary credits to assist in the country's

solveny. It is interesting to note how champions of any particular industry take advantage of the lean years affecting the producers. Quite recently I noticed a reference comparing the goldmining industry with the farming industry. Gold mining has certainly been a wonderful industry for Western Australia during the past few years, and I sincerely hope it will continue to progress. It is fortunate for the industry and the State that gold has risen to such a high price as £8 15s. per ounce, and I hope the value will not recede to anything like pre-depression times. But it must not be forgotten that gold enjoys the benefit of the 25 per cent. exchange rate, which is pegged at that rate mainly on account of the ruinous values of all primary products, and also the fact that indirectly the taxpayers of the country provide the 25 per cent. referred to. Therefore it really amounts to a bonus of 25 per cent. on gold production. It may be said that gold has been taxed. There certainly was a tax enacted under the Dividends Duty on gold profits, which would amount to 1s. 4d. in the pound, but this was imposed to meet costs for which goldmining was responsible. The Goldfields Water Scheme was constructed at a huge cost for goldfields services, and contrary to the statement made by some people, the goldfields did not redeem this outlay, but the general taxpayers of the State contributed a large amount. At present huge sums are being expended to recondition the pipe line, which will take years to recover, and for many years the State made a heavy loss on water supplied to the goldmining industry. Outside of the industry the two racecourses and the goldfields trotting ground were supplied with millions of gallons of water free, and that at a time when it cost approximately 7s. per 1,000 gallons to deliver. In 1923 the then Government reduced the cost of the supply of water to the mining industry from 7s. per 1,000 gallons to 3s., and made provision through the Mines Development Vote to recompense the Water Supply Department with the deficiency. Under this arrangement the following amounts were paid:—

			£	s.	d.
1924	..	..	68,349	4	2
1925	..	..	49,134	18	5
1926	..	..	49,502	16	2
1927	..	..	43,980	15	10
1928	..	..	49,231	2	9
1929	..	..	47,336	19	5
1930	..	..	28,568	19	5
Total for seven years			£336,104	16	2

I do not want the House to think I am decrying this; I agree with it, but I would point out that the farmers are not getting it. In the amount of assistance granted by the Government I have taken a period of seven years, namely, 1923 to 1930, because subsequent to 1930 gold had increased in value and shortly after that year the Country Party-Nationalist Government increased the cost of the water supplied. In addition to the assistance given by the heavy loss on water supplied, generous assistance was granted under the Mines Development Act. For the period extending from 1920 to 1930 this amounted to £380,737, making a total of £716,841. Over and above that there was the guarantee of £350,000 by the State Government for the Wiluna gold mine. This advance was backed by the Federal Government. Fortunately for both Governments, the State in general, and the gold-mining industry, Wiluna has turned out a success and the money has been refunded. I agree that it was a good idea to help the industry in this way. Seeing that they have received this assistance those associated with the industry should not belittle another industry, which is facing a worse crisis under much worse conditions than the goldmining industry was ever confronted with. The most important matter this State has before it is the rehabilitation of the wheatgrowing industry. It is of far-reaching importance, and must be carried out in a sound and expeditious manner. To those not thoroughly acquainted with the position, I would ask them to pay a visit to the eastern wheat areas, and see for themselves the unfortunate position of those who, having fought so strenuously against heavy odds, are still undaunted in spirit and are prepared to continue their operations. I would also ask them to view the very large number of abandoned holdings, many of which have been well improved and constitute excellent wheat-growing land. It is a matter for regret that many of these abandoned properties, that are held by the Agricultural Bank and other financial institutions, are being used to raise revenue by leasing them for cropping purposes. The terms are that these institutions receive $1\frac{1}{2}$ bushels per acre irrespective of results and in that way funds are provided

so that the mortgagee obtains interest on the amounts advanced. Apart altogether from the question of these assets becoming ruined, many curses exist that tend still further to reduce their value. I refer particularly now to the grasshopper pest. During a recent trip I had with the Acting Minister for Customs, Mr. Thorby, I saw thousands of acres of beautiful red forest country without a blade of grass upon it. There was no sign of anything growing upon it, and this was thought to be due to the salinity of the soil. On making inquiries I found that this condition was due entirely to the grasshopper plague. Numbers of forest blocks had been cleared for cultivation purposes, but now are nothing more than a breeding ground for grasshoppers and other vermin. In the case of the land I refer to, the grasshoppers cleared off all the vegetation to such an extent that when the wind blew there was no seed left to provide any plant life whatever for many years to come. Abandoned properties are all responsible for an increase in the rabbit pest. Some people claim that there are fewer rabbits to-day than was the case last year, but they must not forget that the reduction in the number is due to the long dry summer. I admit that the safest way to keep rabbits out is to surround the property with wire netting. The wire netting scheme in the agricultural areas has been a god-send. Very many properties have now been completely encircled with wire-netting, as a result of the work that has been done in the last six or seven years, and I hope that principle will be continued. We also have the dingo and the fox. For the eight years ended the 30th June last no fewer than 104,901 dingo scalps were paid for. That does not represent all the dingoes that were killed. The most important of all these pests, and the most destructive, is the fox. During the last eight years 136,643 foxes were paid for. It is indeed a serious pest in this State. It is somewhat strange that all the principal pests in Australia, sparrows, starlings, foxes and rabbits were imported. Some people have it in their minds that the fox is not really as destructive as it is thought to be. It is, however, not to be borne that the Government should take up that attitude, as they have done particularly in the South-West

of this State. It is even more to be deplored that the responsible heads of departments the most important man in the State with regard to the control of these pests, should hold a similar view. The Chief Inspector of Rabbits at the Road Board conference last week declared that the fox is the best animated rabbit trap we have, and that it rarely attacks sheep. The Chief Inspector should travel around the country to find out what the fox can do and what damage it is responsible for. I have seen lambs with their noses bitten off and others with their tongues torn out.

Hon. W. J. Mann: He said they rarely attacked sheep.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I have seen sheep torn by foxes, and furthermore they do not stop at either sheep or lambs, and have been known to attack calves. It is extraordinary that the very man to whom we look for advice in the control of this pest should make such a ridiculous statement. Foxes will eat rabbits only when they cannot get poultry, lambs or sheep. Once a fox gets a taste for lamb and sheep, it will bother very little about rabbits except the young ones they take out of the burrows. One man with a fumigator will destroy more rabbits in a day than a fox can destroy in six months. In the case of sheep, lambs and poultry, it is the most destructive pest we have. It is to the Chief Inspector that the Minister looks for advice in the control of this pest, and as regards the expenditure of money required to counteract it. The Minister should send him out into the field to obtain first hand information concerning the destruction for which the fox is responsible. I know of many cases where the average lambing will not be more than 50 per cent., and where 35 per cent. of the loss is due to foxes. On my own property I have suffered serious losses from foxes, notwithstanding that the place is wire-netted. It is indeed a serious pest. The bonus should be increased and every effort should be made to keep down this very destructive animal. I know what had to be done in Victoria to counteract it. There is only one good fox, and that is a dead one. I now revert to the abandoned holdings I was talking about. It is only natural that people who lease these properties for cropping purposes should endeavour to get the best possible out of the land with the least outlay and the minimum of labour. If farm properties are neglected

they very soon deteriorate in value. The asset thus becomes a fast diminishing one, and if not soon realised upon will become almost valueless. The system of leasing should be discontinued, otherwise serious losses will be made by all concerned. Through the land being put out of action over a period of years, production will be considerably affected. Money should not be spared to protect these valuable assets, and no effort should be withheld towards that end. Last year the Federal Government provided one and a half million pounds for the relief of farmers in this State. The money is spread over three years, and I understand is allotted up to the 30th December, 1938. It became necessary to provide legislation in this State for the administration of these funds. Accordingly, the Rural Relief Act came into law. The administration of this Act has been carried out with pleasing success by the department, and many people unfortunately placed have been relieved. The question is, does the Act give the administrators all the power they require? I do not think it does. The secured creditor is in a unique position. There is no give and take about it at all. The secured creditor gets everything, whereas the unsecured creditor has to accept 3s. in the pound. Amongst these are storekeepers who have done their best to keep the settlers going. Then there are the doctors. I know that in one case 3s. in the pound would not pay for the medicines supplied. There are also the claims of the hospital. All the unsecured creditors are treated alike. In the case of the secured creditors, after all these provisions have been allowed for, the value of the asset will have increased. That is hardly right. Surely the secured creditors are prepared to do something to re-establish the industry. They cannot expect every other section of the community involved to carry the whole burden whilst they receive their 20s. in the pound.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Half the time it is a question of compound interest.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: And still this goes on. As I have said, the administrators of this Act have done excellent work. The amount so far received from the Federal Government is, I think, only £150,000. I do not know how it has been possible to give relief in so many cases. The fund must have been tremendously overdrawn. The Federal Government ought to be more free with their money so that this worthy work may be car-

ried on. I hope the information given to me is incorrect. I do not want to see this board, which has done so much good, hampered in its operations. I trust that the necessary funds will be forthcoming so that the board's operations may be continued. The Act does not extend any assistance towards carrying on or increasing those activities. The most serious aspect of wheatgrowing is that not only those growers who avail themselves of the Act, but the great majority of wheat farmers, cannot, even if prices be good, continue operations unless some method is devised to replace machinery and power. That is the most important question facing our wheat producers to-day. In this respect both the State and the Federal Government are vitally concerned. Exports are a matter of the gravest importance. For some years our exports have been languishing. The figures of production over the last six years show a heavy decline in each successive year since 1931. They are as follows:—

	Bushels.	
1931	53,504,000	
1932	41,521,000	
1933	41,792,000	
1934	37,305,000	
1935	26,985,000	

The estimate for 1936 is 23,000,000 bushels, or less than half of the production in 1931. Comparing these figures, one realises how vital is the question of exports. And the position will become even worse unless something is done to replace machinery and power on the farms. Many farmers are in the position of being compelled, by the factor of finance, to restrict their operations. Last year's harvest, admittedly, was a poor one; but our returns are going down. In 1935 the State exported 14,961,383 centals, valued at £3,921,897, whilst the quantity exported this year was 8,938,232 centals which, thanks to an increase in price exceeding 7d. per bushel, was valued at £2,803,358. Last year's value would have been very low indeed but for the higher price. Clearly, the position of the wheat industry is most precarious. The speeding up of exports is a vital necessity for replenishing funds abroad. Merchants are concerned from the standpoint of machinery supply: commercial and professional men, and indeed all sections of the community, realise the benefit of exports. The bad results of sev-

eral recent years have forced the farmer to continue to use old and worn-out machinery. This has meant heavy expenditure in purchasing parts for replacements, and that is a procedure which aggravates the position. Even with the addition of new parts, the worn-out machinery is continually breaking down, thus causing delays which are serious not only from the aspect of loss of time but from that of heavy loss in wheat due to shedding, windstorms, fires and so on. Thus the farmer is faced with heavy expenditure, plus heavy losses of grain; and this combination not only restricts operations, but seriously affects financial recovery. The same remarks apply to other farming operations such as ploughing, cultivating, and seeding; and necessarily there is an influence on the acreage cropped. Apparently, no assistance from either the Federal or the State Government is to be forthcoming. Merchants cannot find the needed finance. Therefore it has become necessary to discover some avenue of relief. In this connection I am going to suggest a scheme which I regard as worthy of consideration. Should the scheme not prove acceptable, I hope its discussion will be the means of assisting to formulate something of a nature that will meet the position. My suggestion is that there be provided through the Loan Council a sum of £500,000 to make advances for the purchase of machinery and power to approved farmers with holdings warranting such advances: the maximum advance to be £500, which is to be loaned for a period of ten years at five per cent. interest. An anticipated average advance of £250 would enable this sum to assist 2,000 farmers. The administration of the fund would have to be controlled by a board free from political interference. As cash would be provided, it should be possible to arrange with machinery suppliers to assist, as it would be to their interest to do, by supplying at bedrock prices. The farmer would then be enabled to purchase at reduced rates and reasonable interest. The position of farmers acquiring supplies would necessitate reasonable terms. From this aspect the period of ten years might be subdivided, and the interest averaged over a five-year period. To provide payments on principal and interest for the first five years, I suggest a levy of 3d. per bushel on the crop of the farmer assisted. Taking the basis as 400 acres of crop yielding an average of 12 bushels, which it is not unreasonable to expect from

approved properties, this would provide £60. The average interest on the maximum amount of £500—that is, taking into account the yearly reductions of principal—would be approximately £20, thus leaving £40 available for annual reduction of principal. At the end of the first five years the remaining principal would amount to approximately £300, making five annual payments of £60 each, and the average annual interest would amount to £9, making a total annual payment of approximately £70. Whilst through seasonal difficulties some payments might not be honoured, the repayments made would provide funds for further advances if required. These payments may appear heavy, but it must be borne in mind that the heavy cost of replacements, with losses of crop through delays and breakdowns, take a heavy toll and create a serious position. Whatever scheme may be adopted, there are bound to be losses, but these would not be serious in comparison with the impetus to exports from the system I suggest. In connection with this scheme it should be an important feature of the board's administration to see that reasonable shelter sheds are available for all machinery purchased under the system. It is the bounden duty of both the Federal and the State Governments and of members of the various Legislatures, of commercial and professional men, and in fact of every section of the community, to assist in every way possible to re-establish the wheat-grower; so that the State's yield, which benefits every person in the State, may be replaced at the fifty-million bushel mark, enabling Western Australia to export a large surplus, which will be a wonderful benefit to finance and provide full employment for many who at present do not enjoy that privilege. The legislative proposals mentioned in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech include a Bill to deal with the aborigines question. I forecast that this will indeed prove a difficult measure. It is easy to talk on the subject, but the protection of aborigines is a most perplexing problem. We find all sorts of people expressing opinions and making proposals without knowing anything whatever about the aborigines, speaking merely from hearsay. My sympathies are with the aborigines, but I have positive knowledge that pamphlets have been published without any justification for the statements made in them. However, we will clear that hurdle when we come to it. Then

there is a Bill to establish uniformity of taxation. I am pleased to know that the Government will introduce the measure. I hope I shall not be disappointed in it. However, the position is that for many years we have wanted uniformity of taxation. The problem is highly difficult. About 18 months ago uniformity in this respect was agreed upon between the States and the Federal Government. I hope the promised Bill will be found suitable for our requirements.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Does not that mean something else?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Perhaps. We shall see when the measure comes along. A Municipal Corporations Act has been needed for many years. Parliament cannot do too much to assist municipalities. Another important measure—in fact, the most important Bill on the list—is the one relating to prospecting for oil. In view of the world outlook, if there is any hope of obtaining oil supplies in Australia, money should be spent for prospecting, and the sooner the better. If we were cut off from the rest of the world to-day, our position would be most precarious. At present we depend entirely on outside sources for supplies of oil. I trust that not only members of this Chamber but also members of another place, and Federal legislators as well, will seriously consider the suggestion I have made regarding replacement of machinery and power in all the wheat-growing States. In some of them the position is worse than it is here. All the brains available should be set to work with a view to discovering a scheme whereby machinery and power may be replaced, so as to enable our exporting producers, on whom we depend for our very existence, to speed up exports and so create a position allowing sufficient credits abroad, thus creating such employment as Australia may be proud of. I have much pleasure in supporting the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

On motion by Hon. H. V. Piesse, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.59 p.m.