

board, and that he will agree to reconsider the clause under which the board can only take certain action at the direction of the Minister.

I would prefer to see it possible for the board to take action with the approval of the Minister. I am not criticising the provision of considerable power for the Minister. When the Government and the Treasury undertake responsibility under such legislation—as I have heard it argued in this House—I believe we should be prepared to accept, within reason, that the Minister must retain a certain amount of authority, but I think too much arbitrary authority vested in the Minister or in a board of this nature is likely to defeat the object that the growers have in mind when pressing for legislation of this kind.

Hon. G. B. Wood: The Minister has the same authority with the present board.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: If that is so, I think he has perhaps a little too much power in some respects. I am not much afraid of what a reasonably constituted board, representing the producers and the Government, would do in the matter of the export trade. I imagine they would do everything to foster it, but at the same time I do not want to see such restriction placed on the production of barley that the producer of feed barley is put in an impossible position, or that the restriction should operate to an extent that would preclude returned soldiers from the recent war—whom we hope will some day be producers—from growing barley. That is a matter which is subject to the approval of the board under its powers, but at the same time the Bill could be very restrictive. When the Minister replies to the debate I hope he will be able to give some assurance on these points.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.50 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 1st October, 1946.

	PAGE
Questions: Housing, as to permits to build and homes erected	1013
Railways—(a) as to Perth-Bunbury passenger service	1014
(b) as to Cottlesloe station crossing	1015
(c) as to details of Diesel cars	1015
Bills: Country Areas Water Supply, Jr.	1015
Traffic Act Amendment, recom.	1015
Business Names Act Amendment, returned	1017
Totalisator Duty Act Amendment, report	1017
Friendly Societies Act Amendment, 2nd, Cont., report	1017
Annual Estimates: Committee of Supply, general debate concluded	1017
Votes and Items discussed	1017

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

QUESTIONS.

HOUSING.

As to Permits to Build and Homes Erected.

Mr. WATTS asked the Premier:

1, How many applications for permits to build their own dwellings have been made to the Workers' Homes Board in the last 12 months by—

- (a) married couples without children;
- (b) couples about to marry?

How many of each of (a) and (b) have been granted permits?

2, When did the board decide against the granting of permits in cases where only two people were to be housed?

3, What were the reasons taken into consideration in arriving at such decision?

4, How many homes built under the Commonwealth-State Housing Scheme have been allotted—

- (a) to married couples without children;
- (b) to married couples with one child?

5, How many applications for homes under the Commonwealth-State Housing Scheme have been received since the inception of the scheme from—

- (a) persons in the metropolitan area;
- (b) persons outside that area?

6, How many homes have been built or approved under such scheme in—

- (a) the metropolitan area;
- (b) outside that area?

7, How many applications for permits to build their own dwellings have been received—

(a) from persons in the metropolitan area;

(b) from persons outside that area, and how many in each case have been refused?

8, How many applications have been received from Service personnel of the 1939-45 war under the War Service Homes Act?

9, How many such applications have been approved?

10, How many homes have been provided either by erection or purchase?

The PREMIER replied:

1, 3,502 applications for permits to build their own homes were received during the 12 months ended the 30th June, 1946. No classification has been kept showing the proportion received from married couples without children, or couples about to marry. In very extenuating circumstances, permits have been issued to married couples without children, and no permits have been issued to couples about to marry, except under the War Service Homes Act, where applicants receive attention according to the date of application.

2, The decision against the granting of permits in cases where only two people are to be housed was instituted to assist in overcoming the lag in homes for families and was made at the inception of the permit system. The same policy was adopted by the Department of War Organisation of Industry.

3, All permits are issued on the basis of hardship, and it is considered that persons with families and without proper housing facilities are suffering greater hardship than those without families. It is considered essential that the new homes erected should provide accommodation for people with families.

4, The number of Commonwealth-State rental houses allocated to married couples without children, or with one child only is as follows:—(a) To married couples without children, 3. (b) To married couples with one child, 42.

5, The number of applications received under the Commonwealth-State Housing

Agreement is:—(a) From persons in the metropolitan area, 3,720. (b) From persons outside the metropolitan area, 1,055.

6, The number of houses approved under the scheme is 1,356, of which 369 had been completed and 372 were under construction at the 31st August, 1946. Of these, 583 are in the metropolitan area and 158 in the country.

7, The information regarding applications for permits to build from persons within the metropolitan area and from those outside the metropolitan area is not readily available, but the following information is furnished:—Period ended the 30th June, 1946—Applications for permits, 3,502. Applications approved: Metropolitan area, 863. Outside metropolitan area, 614—1,477.

During the period March to June, 1946, comparative figures of grants and refusals were as follows:—(a) Metropolitan area, 351 granted, 572 refused. (b) Outside metropolitan area, 315 granted, 198 refused. Total: 666 granted, 770 refused.

8, Applications received under the War Service Homes Act from Service personnel of the 1939-45 war numbered 2,230.

9, 509 have been approved.

10, The number of homes provided under the War Service Homes Act is 178.

RAILWAYS.

(a) *As to Perth-Bunbury Passenger Service.*

Mr. McLARTY asked the Minister for Railways:

Would he state—

1, When it is proposed to improve the passenger service on the Perth-Bunbury line?

2, What improvements are contemplated?

The MINISTER replied:

1, The train service was augmented from the 29th September, 1946, by an additional Diesel-electric rail car service from Perth to Collie departing at 6 p.m. on Sundays and returning ex Collie at 8.30 a.m. on Mondays.

2, The Railway Department will operate road passenger services between Bunbury and South-West towns in the near future and in conjunction with these services it is proposed to run a fast day train between Perth and Bunbury, but this train will not cater for intermediate travellers.

(b) As to Cottesloe Station Crossing.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Railways:

1, Is he aware that a number of persons who cross over the railway line at Cottesloe have had their names and addresses taken by an officer of the department?

2, What is the object of this procedure?

3, Has he given consideration to providing a recognised crossing space at ground level with suitable warning signs to accommodate pedestrians and prams?

The MINISTER replied:

1, Yes. The names and addresses of nine persons were taken in a special check by railway investigating officers at Cottesloe on the 9th instant.

2, To prevent trespassing and damage to railway fences at this station; also evasion of ticket collection.

3, No. An overhead bridge is provided for the purpose of crossing lines, and the provision of a level crossing for pedestrian traffic is not considered necessary.

(c) As to Details of Diesel Cars.

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Railways:

What are the following particulars regarding the Diesel rail cars in use on the Western Australian Government Railways:—

- (a) Length of body;
- (b) diameter of driving wheels;
- (c) diameter of bogie wheels;
- (d) bogie wheel base;
- (e) between bogie pivot and driving wheels;
- (f) maximum speed;
- (g) weight unladen;
- (h) weight on driving wheels;
- (i) engine, make, power, type;
- (j) lighting?

The MINISTER replied:

- (a) Power car, 61ft. Trailer, 52ft.
- (b) Power car, 2ft. 7½in.
- (c) Power car, 2ft. 7½in. Trailer, 2ft. 7½in.
- (d) Power car, 6ft. 6in. Trailer, 6ft. 6in.
- (e) Power car 3ft. 3in.
- (f) 45 miles per hour.
- (g) Power car, unladen 29 tons 6 cwt. 0 qtr. Trailer, 11 tons 13 cwt. 0 qtr.

(h) Unladen, 9 tons. Loaded, 10 tons 3 cwt. 2 qtr.

(i) Armstrong Saurer, 120 h.p.r., six-cylinder Diesel.

(j) Incandescant.

BILL—COUNTRY AREAS WATER SUPPLY.

Introduced by the Minister for Works and read a first time.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.

Recommittal.

On motion by Mr. Graham, Bill recommended for the further consideration of Clauses 5 and 7.

In Committee.

Mr. Rodoreda in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clause 5—Amendment of Section 9:

Mr. GRAHAM: When the Bill was previously in Committee, I submitted some amendments which, to my mind, at the time appeared to be somewhat cumbersome. Since then it has been possible to have them drafted in proper form in order to achieve the objects then sought. I therefore move an amendment—

That a new subclause be inserted as follows:—“(5) In respect of any motor vehicle for which a license granted under this section shall expire prior to the first day of July, one thousand nine hundred and forty-seven, the local authority may, on application duly made for a further license for such vehicle, and notwithstanding the provisions of the preceding subsections of this section, grant a license for such number of months not exceeding the number applied for as the local authority shall determine. The fee payable for the license granted shall be such amount as bears to the license fee for a license for twelve months the same ratio as the period for which the license is granted bears to a period of twelve months, and the local authority shall make any necessary refund accordingly.”

I have discussed the matter with officers of the Public Works Department and the Traffic Branch. They are unanimous as to the desirability of adopting the procedure set out in the amendment. The object is to arrive at a position as from next year when new licenses will operate for 12 months from the date of their issue. Thus local authori-

ties will be given an opportunity to spread the issuing of licenses, although it will not be compulsory for them to do so. The object is to overcome the rush for licenses at the traffic office in the last few weeks of June and the first few weeks of July and, to a lesser extent, at the half-yearly licensing period. I also discussed the matter with the secretary of the Royal Automobile Club, who assures me that his club is solidly behind the amendment. So far as new licenses are concerned, there need be no opposition to the amendment. The perfect system would be one where the licenses were issued smoothly and regularly throughout the year. We should not have these acute rush periods followed by slack periods.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: As the member for East Perth has told the Committee, he did explain the effect of this amendment some little time ago and arrangements were subsequently made for him to have the conferences to which he referred. At the conferences it was unanimously agreed that the principle of the amendment was desirable, as it would enable the licensing authority in any district to make a better spread of the renewal of licenses than would be possible otherwise. In other words, it will bring into being, much quicker, a larger measure of benefit from the proposed system of staggering the licensing period. Instead of the licenses now due to expire on the 30th June next being renewed for a further 12 months and thus having a very large number of end-of-June-renewals for several years to come, the proposed system could be operated by the licensing authorities for the purpose of breaking down the great bulk of the renewals at the end of June in each year.

Unless this principle were included in the Bill, the system of staggering the licensing period would benefit only people buying new or secondhand vehicles because they would be the only ones to have their licenses run from the actual date of licensing until the expiry date. Those whose licenses are due to expire on the 30th June next would, in the majority of cases, renew for the next 12 months so that there would be this great bulk of licenses continuing for several years even under the system of staggering. The amendment will allow the licensing authorities to reduce the number of licenses falling due in

June of each year by smoothing them out over a period of from two to six months. There may be some arguments against this principle—I can think of some myself—but I cannot think of any sufficiently strong to outweigh the undoubted advantages contained in the amendment, which I propose to support.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The amendment speaks of "local authority" and the Minister speaks of "licensing authority." Should "local authority" be amended?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No. The definition in the Act refers to "local authority."

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 7—Amendment of Section 22:

Mr. GRAHAM: This relates to the issue of drivers' licenses and will establish a new principle in the Bill. The same arguments that applied to the vehicle licenses apply equally to those of drivers. Instead of a rushed period and then a slack period, the issue of drivers' licenses will be spread more or less evenly over the whole 12 months. Once again the argument in favour of the amendment has particular force so far as the central Traffic Office is concerned. The problem is not so great in the country districts where there are not so many applications for renewals. The cost of a driver's license is actually 5d. per month; it is 5s. for the 12 months. It might happen that my driver's license will expire on the 30th June next. Well, instead of then paying 5s. for it to expire on the 30th June, 1948, I might be asked to take it out so that it would expire on the 31st August, 1948, when I would pay 5s. 10d. for the license. That system would operate on the first occasion only. After the year of adjustment the license would fall due at regular 12-monthly intervals. Arrangements might be made so that the date of renewal of a person's driver's license and his vehicle license would, so far as possible, coincide. I move an amendment—

That at the end of proposed new Sub-section (3) the following proviso be added:—"Provided that, in respect of any license under this section which may be granted and issued during the year one thousand nine hundred and forty-seven, the license shall remain in force for such number of months not being less than six

nor more than eighteen as the Commissioner of Police or member of Police Force granting the same shall determine and shall specify in the license issued.''

'There is a limiting factor in that the period shall be not less than six nor more than 18 months. That gives a spread of 12 months in order to bring about a regular and steady flow of applications.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is logical that we should allow the same principle that applies to motor vehicle licenses to be applied to the renewal of drivers' licenses. If a person whose motor vehicle license is to expire on the 30th June next, has his succeeding period of license made to cover nine months he would, I imagine, desire that his driver's license should cover the same period. It would be inconvenient for him to have his motor vehicle license running out on one date and his driver's license on another.

Hon. N. Keenan: Is a driver's license ever issued for less than 12 months?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not think so under the present law, but the amendment will give to the licensing authority, or the local authority, the right to adjust the period of license for the vehicle and the right to adjust the period of the driver's license. Therefore the two will be kept together, which is desirable. I support the amendment.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported with further amendments.

BILL—BUSINESS NAMES ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

BILL—TOTALISATOR DUTY ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—FRIENDLY SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Order of the Day read for the resumption from the 19th September of the debate on the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1946-47.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 19th September on the general discussion on the Treasurer's Financial Statement; Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair.

General debate concluded: Votes and items discussed as follows:—

Vote—Legislative Council £2,760—put and passed.

Votes—Legislative Assembly, £3,728; Joint House Committee, £5,498; Joint Printing Committee, £6,472; Joint Library Committee £340; Premier's Office, £18,535; Treasury, £33,826; Governor's Establishment, £3,324; Executive Council, £5—agreed to.

Vote—London Agency, £11,937:

Mr. McDONALD: I had some observations to make on this matter some time ago and this seems an opportune time to make further reference to the subject, as there is to be a change in the appointment to the office of Agent General. I know that Mr. and Mrs. Troy have rendered meritorious service to the State and to Australian Servicemen and women during a difficult period, but I repeat that the Agent General's Department should be the subject of a periodical report—at least annually—to be laid on the Table of the House. It should be a very informative document.

The Premier: I quite agree with that.

Mr. McDONALD: There would be no harm even in having a quarterly report during the next three or four years, but at all events there should be a half-yearly or yearly report covering such matters as the prospects of migration and many other factors of importance to this State. Now the office of Agent General is to be filled by a member of this Parliament, who has had long experience and is familiar with Government business and the requirements of our State, so we may look forward to valuable information coming through him to this House.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: One deplores the fact that so little interest is taken in the finances of this State. I think the time has

arrived when this Parliament should make some gesture to show that it realises it must re-adjust its economy in order to meet the altered conditions that obtain owing to the encroachment of the Commonwealth Government. I do not think all the States are expending the amount per head of population that we are expending in this State on the London Agency. I believe we should start immediately to review the whole of our economy and see if we can effect some reductions in our expenditure, in view of the lessening of this State's responsibility in many spheres. Such an action would indicate to the Grants Commission, and to those States that are contributing to the needs of this State, that at last we are alive to the economic position and are trying to adjust our resources accordingly. This London Agency Vote can be approached in that spirit and it deals with an activity that might be reviewed. As long as we are getting grants that are required to meet necessities, how can we expect the standard States to be silent and to continue to agree to make extra contributions to cover Budget deficiencies?

Over the years, I have on many occasions said that as our responsibility declines, owing to the Commonwealth Government accepting financial responsibility, we should adjust our State economy accordingly. If we do not do so, our economy will not be sound and we will not be able to continue. For years I have tried to get the House to appreciate how unfair it is for us to disregard our responsibilities in economising, while expecting the Commonwealth and the other States to assist us, year after year. This department is one that could be reviewed without doing injustice to the State or to any individual. We have reached a period when, in my opinion, the whole matter should be reviewed. There are other means that I could mention, but if I attempted to do so on this Vote, I would be out of order. I have used this one to explain my views on the subject. Had I been alert enough to use the general discussion period to condemn the economy of the State, I could have done so. I have been going into the public accounts very thoroughly and I proposed to review them at some length. Evidently the Leader of the Opposition knew all about the arrangement, though he was not going to be called upon to speak. We had no intimation whatever of the arrangement made between the Government and the Opposition, with the result that I for one

have been badly left, and I regret the fact exceedingly.

Mr. NORTH: I am glad that this Vote is being discussed because the London Agency is not on most occasions given sufficient attention. The London Agency might be used generally for ascertaining details of some of the post-war schemes in Britain that might be applied in this State. I have some information about what is known as the Reilly Plan which is being tested out at the Woodchurch Estate, Birkenhead, Yorkshire. This scheme provides for a completely new design in living that would be of great assistance to the local authorities if we could, through the Minister in charge of local government, get into touch with it through the Agent General. We would then have an opportunity of finding out something about the benefits of this scheme. At present we know nothing about it except what we have gleaned from articles in the Press and from hearsay.

The Reilly Plan is a new design for living which would be of great benefit to the local authorities that cared to adopt it. The plan deals with the areas to be set out by local authorities for the building of new homes. At present, so far as I am aware, practically the whole of the new building now in progress in Western Australia is on orthodox lines, and no change has been made in the lay-out of streets or to provide in other ways for the convenience of the people. During the war, and perhaps previous to the war, we heard that new ideas were being introduced for improving housing designs, and not merely from the point of view of the homes themselves, and that these ideas were being circulated so that people could study them.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not wish to burke discussion, but the Vote before the Chamber is that of the London Agency. If the hon. member considers the Vote should be reduced or reviewed, his remarks would be quite in order, but he is not entitled at this time to discuss the question of the lay-out of homes, and such-like matters.

Mr. NORTH: In view of your ruling, Mr. Chairman, I will content myself by saying that I consider we could make use of the Agent General to find out something about such schemes. In the past, we have not used the London Agency sufficiently for

the benefit of the State. It is true, as has been mentioned many times, that the London Agency was instituted mainly for the raising of loans, apart from work such as the general advertising of the State and the obtaining of migrants for the State. For many years the raising of loans in London has been a thing of the past, and therefore the time is opportune to raise the question of improving the activities of the Agency along the lines I have indicated. In view of your ruling, Mr. Chairman, I will defer any further remarks pending the moving of a separate motion, when I shall be in order.

Mr. McLARTY: Will the Premier inform us what additional activities the Agent General's office will undertake to account for the increase of £2,000 in the Vote? In the past the Agent General played an important part when we were borrowing in London, but those days have gone. Apparently the most important work in future will be to give publicity to the State and to attract migrants for the State. In this work the Agent General could render most valuable service. I consider that such work should not be left to the Federal authorities. We need someone who has an intimate knowledge of Western Australian conditions to advise us on migration matters. Through the Agent General, we should endeavour to get as many young migrants as possible. The various homes including the Fairbridge Farm School are practically empty. The Fairbridge Farm School has proved to be an ideal place to bring up young children, and we have examples of the soundness of its work in turning out thousands of first-class citizens. The Agent General should play a most important part in future in dealing with migration and should be able to publicise the general prospects offered by this State.

The PREMIER: I cannot agree at all with the remarks of the member for Guildford-Midland regarding the possible dwindling of the responsibilities of the London Agency. I think the time is now when the responsibilities of the States in their respective spheres, both internally and abroad, should be constantly watched. In consultation, the Premiers of all the States agreed that Australia, through the several States, should collaborate not only in England but also in other countries of the world where it is felt that direct State representation

would be of advantage to Australia as a whole and where it could not be admitted that all the work requisite in the interests of the States could be attended to by the Commonwealth. As regards the hon. member's statement of his not having been alert enough to know what was happening in the House, I can make no statement beyond mentioning that unfortunately the Minister for Agriculture was in conference with another Minister on very important matters affecting administration, and I simply arranged the business as was necessary by postponing two items. If the hon. member did not speak, it was not my fault, because there have been weeks of opportunity for him to do so.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The end of the general debate came so quickly.

The PREMIER: In commenting on the point raised by the member for Murray-Wellington, I am hoping that the matters requiring the attention of the London Agency will expand, and I believe that a very close watch should be kept on after-the-war interests that may prove of great benefit to the State. The increased expenditure will be incurred because of the changing of Agents General—bringing one home and conveying the other to London.

Mr. WATTS: I agree with the remarks made by the member for West Perth as to the necessity for a report being presented, as has not been done at least for many years, of the activities of the Agent General. I recall having made some remarks on this subject a few weeks ago during the general debate, and I was glad to hear from the Premier, by way of interjection when the member for West Perth was speaking, that he felt the same way as that hon. member did. In the net result, I hope we shall have such a report as an annual feature. But I do not agree with the member for Guildford-Midland. It is very rarely that I do agree with him, though there have been some rare and important occasions when we have reached agreement on some matters. Seemingly the hon. member proposes that, at a time when the development of this State was never more important, at a time when we expect that in the reasonably near future some attempt will be made to revive migration and presumably people will come to this State in fair proportion, Western Australia should be left in London, the only

one of the Australian States, without a representative to look after its particular and peculiar interests.

I have no hesitation in saying that the hon. gentleman, in expressing the views he did, was, to put it mildly, displaying a most peculiar attitude towards the interests of Western Australia. I venture to say that it is highly desirable that the type of person to be brought to this State should be the subject of the most searching investigation. Many of the schemes that operated in past years might easily have become failures—in some instances they did—because of the lack of attention or the giving of insufficient attention to this aspect of the matter. Eight or nine years ago the point of view expressed by the member for Guildford-Midland might to some degree have been tenable, but I submit that at present it would be extremely detrimental to the interests of the State if we were for a period of years without the services of an Agent General to safeguard, protect and encourage the interests of the State.

In my view, the possibility of interesting British business firms in coming to this State is one to which the Agent General should pay some attention. At least no harm could be done if he endeavoured to extend our industrial development in this manner. I am satisfied that there are opportunities for extending our industrial development by the intervention of firms from the Old Country. Just at this very time, after we have passed through almost seven years of war and when all sorts of things are retrogressing, just when we are looking forward to making progress, the hon. gentleman wants to put a sprag in the wheel by saying "We shall have no Agent General; we shall have no representation in London." If his advice were followed, this would be the only State without such representation, and the net result would be that Western Australia's interests, which have been not too well looked after in the past by our colleagues of the Eastern States, would have no one from Western Australia to foster them. That certainly will not suit me.

The gentleman who has recently been appointed to the position of Agent General and will take office in a few months' time seems to me to be one who, because of his experience of the industries carried on in the State, because of the knowledge he pos-

sesses of those industries, and moreover because of the undoubted ability which he must have and which he has demonstrated in his leadership of the Legislative Council for many years, will worthily represent the State, if given an opportunity without interference from the member for Guildford-Midland and people like him, and will play a very prominent part in the activities that are necessary for the development of the State along the lines I have indicated and, perhaps, along other lines also. Therefore I trust no support will be given to the hon. member in the proposition he has just made to the Committee.

Mr. LESLIE: I take it that the activities of the Agent General in London are not of necessity confined to the British Isles. I would not be agreeable to any such suggestion. Mention was made in the earlier part of the debate on the General Estimates of the fact that we stand almost on the brink of another war. Certainly the relationship that exists today between the nations cannot by any means be said by anyone to be happy. The appointment of an Agent General in London who is, or should be, in close contact with what is taking place on the European Continent, is necessary, provided his activities and interests extend beyond the shores of England itself.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Why do you not say Great Britain?

Mr. LESLIE: Very well, I will say Great Britain! The shores of Scotland are included in that. A good Agent General over there can assist materially in achieving a better understanding between the people of this country and the people of countries overseas, provided we adopt a policy which will permit those people to accept that we are sincere in our desire to help them. Australia was fortunate during the recent war, inasmuch as it was not touched in any way. Compare our circumstances with those of the people in Europe and England itself! In European countries there is devastation. Those places have been wrecked entirely out of production and they are endeavouring to re-establish themselves; endeavouring to secure the three essential things of life, before they look for anything else. The three things to which I refer are those upon which our standard of living is judged. They are food, warmth and shelter. We need nothing more than those things, and the

greater the extent to which we can supply the people with those three essentials, the higher will we raise their standard of living.

The CHAIRMAN: I hope the hon. member will confine himself to the Vote.

Mr. LESLIE: I am doing so. I want to point out that Australia—and Western Australia in particular—can supply those three essential commodities. I believe it is because nations beyond the seas are looking at us jealously, looking at the resources we have and considering that we are disinclined to use those resources to the fullest possible extent to assist them, that there is abroad a spirit of suspicion and jealousy. If the policy of our Government is correct, it is the Agent General's job to attempt to dispel that spirit. It is his task to point out that while we speak of full employment we realise that before that can be achieved there must be a policy of full production; and that the talk of restriction that takes place today because we are afraid we are not going to secure a payable price for our commodities, is not going to affect their being able to obtain from us the things they need. If we are able to do that and apply that policy, that is the main thing. Not only must our Agent General be able to talk about these things in this way, but we, by our actions here, must back him up with proof that not only have we these resources—of which they are aware—but also that we intend to the fullest possible extent to make our products available to them. If members care to study reports on the standard of living as it has applied throughout the world, they will find that, pre-war, on an average two-thirds of the nations had a lower standard of living than we consider reasonable. That means that they have been without those essentials I mentioned—food, warmth and shelter.

In Australia we have reached the stage in our standard of living in which food, warmth and shelter come to us almost naturally. Certainly today there is a shortage of some commodities, but that has been brought about by artificial means. There is no shortage in our resources. We look beyond those three essentials and seek artificial luxuries to boost our standard of living. But the people over there are looking for the very things that are a secondary consideration to us. If the Government is sincere—

and it can only prove its sincerity by removing every kind of restriction on production of any of those vital commodities—I consider it one of the most important jobs of the Agent General to convince these people that we have the goods and will supply them. If he can do this, I am satisfied that he will achieve in a tangible and definite way for this country at least one of the essentials of the Atlantic Charter—that is, that the resources of every country will be available to other countries.

During the war we spoke about the Atlantic Charter as a morale-builder for the people of all nations. But today it is a forgotten thing and steadily we are building barriers around our countries and maintaining those barriers. Is there any need to be surprised, therefore, when we find people of other nations ready to fly at our throat? Let us realise that this is a capitalist country. This country is wealthy beyond the dreams of the poor people in European lands. I would ask my friends on the other side of the Chamber to realise that they can go back to early history and find a set of circumstances existing at one time that does not exist today. In those days there was, as they would say, the big bloated capitalist and the poor downtrodden people. There were the people who had, and the people who had not.

The Minister for Lands: Which Bill are you speaking on now?

Mr. LESLIE: I am speaking on the Agent General's Vote.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member will not be speaking much longer unless he gets back to the subject!

Mr. LESLIE: I will tie-up my remarks. I want it to be realised that these people overseas are today the people who have not and we are the people who have. They are envious of us as a nation, not as individuals, because we have the resources. We find people in the Malayan States and South Asia applying to us for finance, for loans to enable them to purchase our goods. What a state for Australia to be in! It is the job of the Agent General in London to point out to these people that, while we have these things, we are not the capitalist country that the people in Europe, and even England, believe we are, and that there is no need for them to cast envious eyes on this land; because it occupies a unique position in the

world, and it is the envy of other countries. It will be his job to point out that while we appear to be the "haves" and are definitely a capitalist country—as my friends opposite would describe it, if they were individualistic instead of nationalistic—we are prepared to share what we have.

The Minister for Lands: Menzies said we were going to be Socialists.

Mr. LESLIE: I am not talking about Socialists but about Governments doing something to remove the policies of restriction that have prevailed. We have to let these people know that we are out to meet their requirements and to make up as far as possible the losses they suffered during the war years. We must maintain a good relationship with them and not let artificial barriers stand in the way. We must let them see we are prepared to take the things they can provide and that we need and that, because Providence has blessed this country, we are prepared to make available to them the three vital necessities for living,—again I repeat them, and they come only from primary production—food, warmth and shelter. If the Agent General can convince these countries that we in Australia are open-hearted and are prepared to supply those goods; and if, at the same time, our Governments do not talk of imposing restrictions, but remove those that interfere with maximum production; then the Agent General will be doing a good job. But he must be backed up by good Government.

Mr. ABBOTT: The Agent General has a very important function to fulfil both in assisting migration and in helping industrial enterprises that desire to establish themselves in this country, by supplying them with information relevant to Western Australia. I do not see how the Agent General is to make the people of the British Isles aware of his function on an allowance of £120 for advertising. That seems to me to be an extraordinarily small amount. Apart from anything else, 25 per cent has to be deducted from that sum to begin with, which means that he is allowed something like £100 a year for advertising to enable him to get in touch with those who might be interested in this State.

There is no doubt that South Australia has always taken the important step of becoming acquainted with industries likely to be established in Australia. Before the war,

the names of passengers who were leaving England by boat for this country were cabled to the South Australian Government, which made contact with those people on their arrival, paying them every possible courtesy and furnishing them with every assistance. I should like to see our Agent General function in a much more active form in this respect. The Government of Western Australia or the Minister for Industrial Development could at once be notified by the Agent General of any people who were coming out by air or were likely to be interested in the establishment of industrial enterprises in this State. If this suggestion were adopted and if more advertising were done I think in the end this would bring its own reward.

Vote put and passed.

*Vote—Public Service Commissioner,
£2,636.*

Mr. NORTH: I suggest the Public Service Commissioner should be permitted by law—and the law altered accordingly—to appoint one or more efficiency officers. We have to look forward to the idea of a greater Government control of enterprises and enlargement of the civil service. The State Government might give attention to the suggestion that all these public services, including the one under review, should be enabled to have efficiency officers appointed. By "efficiency officer" I mean an officer or officers whose sole duty it would be, not to carry out any departmental job, but to do what is done by big concerns and undertakings in America, conduct investigations with a view to cutting down costs, avoiding wastage, and making suggestions for the improved efficiency of the particular department or departments concerned. If the Public Service Commissioner had this power and Cabinet were to agree to the suggestion being carried into effect, I think he would get good results and that this would be the means of saving thousands of pounds in the public service, at the same time doing something of an experimental nature that would be worthwhile. If the Premier has any doubts about the value of the suggestion, I would refer him to what has been achieved in America in several big undertakings and business concerns which have been working along these lines.

Vote put and passed.

Votes—Government Motor Car Service, £1,610; Audit, £21,450; Compassionate Allowances, £3,482; Government Stores, £23,226; Taxation, £12,000—agreed to.

Vote—Workers' Homes Board, £10,047.

Mr. McLARTY: I should like the Premier to inform me why it is laid down that houses that are being built by the Workers' Homes Board today can only be built on a rental basis. Prior to the war the board was building homes and they were being purchased on time payment. I cannot see why that system does not operate today. We know that the rents that are being charged compared with those existing before the war are now abnormally high. Even so, the tenants are only in the houses on a weekly basis. It does not matter how long they remain there and what high rents they pay, they can never own their homes.

Mr. Smith: That is hardly correct.

Mr. McLARTY: I think it is. I understand that no workers' homes are today being paid off under the rental system. I cannot see that it would make any difference to the board if it did allow the other system to operate. Many of the people who are occupying those houses are permanent residents of the town in which they live. If they are permanent residents they should be given the opportunity to pay off the charges on these houses on the rental system. That would not in any way mean that there would be fewer houses to let. The Premier might give the Committee some explanation of why tenants are unable to purchase these houses and indicate when the system may be altered.

The PREMIER: The hon. member will recall that last year legislation was introduced in connection with the agreement between the Commonwealth and the States for the construction of homes generally and their rental under the Commonwealth-States' agreement. That was designed to give to people whose earnings were sub-standard but whose responsibilities were great, and who could not normally pay rent, the opportunity, in spite of their income, to obtain a home, the Commonwealth and the States to share in any loss occasioned thereby so that those people would pay only a proportion of their income as rent. During the war the activities of the Workers' Homes Board ceased in respect of construction. There is no hindrance in regard to permits on the priority basis

for such people as those who may have had workers' homes constructed for them by the board in normal times. For the time being the lag in building due to the cessation of all such work for six years has meant that, to give effect to the provisions of the Commonwealth-States agreement, and to give the most needy the homes that are able to be constructed, all those homes that are being constructed at the moment by the Workers' Homes Board as agent are under the rental basis. As tomorrow it is likely I will be introducing a Bill dealing with amendments to and the consolidation of the Workers' Homes Act, it is my intention to give the House a complete outline of the subject of housing.

Mr. WATTS: I do not propose to indulge in any criticism of the Workers' Homes Board, because I have some appreciation of the difficulties which have beset it. At the same time I think there are circumstances which the administration might review in regard to providing homes for people in this State. I have already drawn attention to the doubts I have in mind as to the advisability of putting a bar—it is virtually a bar—against the applicants who desire to build their homes and who are merely married couples. It seems to me there are many cases where those people should receive a type of priority consideration. Some of them who have been brought to my notice are young men who have seen six or perhaps more years of service in the Armed Forces. In one or two instances the ladies they have recently married or to whom they were married have seen similar service, perhaps not for such a long period, in other sections of the Forces. They are now getting on in years, one might say, many of them reaching the age of 30. They have no home in which they could set up a family, and they are disinclined to begin that procedure when they are obliged to live in cramped quarters, perhaps in a room of a house or with a family in a house in circumstances which are not conducive, bearing in mind their recent antecedents, to the setting up of a family.

To lay down a rule, or what is virtually a rule, that they are not going to be given a permit because there are only two persons at this stage to house, is not conducive to the desirable increase in our population and to the still more desirable building up of a home influence in Western Australia.

Without elaborating the point these are what I believe constitute sound reasons for an early reconsideration of this aspect of the matter. I believe that something should be done to relieve the housing shortage because I am of opinion that in some instances the people who were relieved in the manner I have suggested would be making way for someone else. There is another aspect to which I would draw attention. It has been represented to me—I can be corrected if I am wrong—that the policy of the board has been to refuse permits to build a dwelling to people who already live in one, even though that dwelling may be of a poor standard, but that if they are living in a room or in rooms in someone else's house, it is much easier for them to obtain a permit.

The whole question has been examined, as I understand it, on the basis of the greatest hardship. I venture to say that that method does not provide the greatest contribution to the solution of the difficulties associated with housing. If a person with a small house is given another he vacates the one he occupies and it becomes available to someone else. If a person is living in a room in a dwelling belonging to someone else and is given a permit and builds a house, and the room he lived in is vacated, there are many instances where that room remains unlet, because the person who owns the dwelling in which the room was let has had enough of having it occupied by comparative strangers and decides—to use a colloquialism—that he or she has “had it,” and will not let it again. In consequence it has been represented to me in a number of instances that nobody is accommodated by the extra house which has been built in those circumstances, whereas in the other case to which I have referred an additional dwelling has been made available. I suggest that the Workers' Homes Board give consideration to that aspect of the matter.

Delays which have taken place in the erection or completion of dwellings which have been brought under the Commonwealth-State Housing Scheme have come under my notice. I know of some instances where the dwelling was habitable and completed, one might say, with the exception of the bathroom furniture and such-like stuff, and for two or three months be-

cause these items were in short supply, although the house was otherwise complete and available for occupation, nobody was allowed to occupy it, notwithstanding that there was a considerable number of applicants who had sent their names in to the board for consideration in respect of that particular dwelling. It is possible and highly probable that the people who had applied for the house were living under conditions far worse than would exist did they move into the new house containing only temporary fittings in the bathroom and so forth. To hold up the proceedings of their removal into the new premises because certain desirable fittings were not available, does not seem to me to make any great contribution towards the solution of the problem.

In more recent weeks similar representations have been made to me and I understand that at Katanning, to which township I shall now refer, the Workers' Homes Board has seen fit to provide temporary accommodation in the way of galvanised iron baths instead of the prescribed enamelware that was supposed to be installed, thereby enabling the premises to be occupied much sooner than they would otherwise have been. I hope that practice will be followed because the circumstances are sufficiently difficult and the delays occasioned in getting houses erected, particularly in the country districts, are already so great without those difficulties being accentuated by insistence upon perfection instead of adopting something that while not exactly perfection, is at any rate not very far below it. There is also the question of applications from persons in the country who desire to obtain housing accommodation. I think that to an extent at any rate some of the local authorities are rather to blame for the fact that the situation in their townships has not been brought under the notice of the Workers' Homes Board.

The Premier: You know they were invited to do that over 12 months ago.

Mr. WATTS: I was just about to say that. To my knowledge, a communication was sent out by the Workers' Homes Board asking that all cases of hardship be brought under the notice of the board and I know that a number of local authorities did take steps to find out from their people just what the position was. Others ap-

parently conceived the idea that it did not matter anyhow, and therefore did not take the necessary steps. In consequence, we find in the answers to the questions which the Premier gave me today that the number of applications received under the Commonwealth-State Housing Scheme from persons in the metropolitan area has been 3,720 and from persons outside the metropolitan area 1,055. I venture to suggest that those figures do not represent the true position regarding the requirements in the respective areas at the present time, and I do not hesitate to say that.

I think some of the local authorities could have greatly increased those applications, but did not do so, had they taken more notice of the document sent to them by the Workers' Homes Board. When they do take steps to answer the communication, even if somewhat belatedly, a tremendous time elapses before the applications that are made through their activities receive consideration. That is known, I think, by the local authorities when they have made applications, and that has acted, I am convinced, as a deterrent against those bodies forwarding cases that they ought to bring under the notice of the board. I am obliged, of course, to quote an area about which I know something. The township of Katanning by comparison with other centres has been extremely well served by the Workers' Homes Board, but it is at least 18 months since it started to put in applications through the local authority there. Those applications have mounted since they commenced to be sent in some 18 months ago to a total of about 44. First of all, there were applications for the erection of two brick houses. They got along handsomely until it came to putting the tiles on the roof, and then there was considerable delay—I take it, quite unavoidably—through not being able to find people to put the tiles on. Subsequently that work was attended to and the remainder of the building operations went on apace until it came to a question of the furniture for the bathrooms. That held up proceedings for a considerable period before the usual furniture for the rooms could be obtained, and it was approximately three months from the time the building was finished until anyone was housed therein.

Even then, difficulties arose in other directions. The board decided it would call

for tenders for further premises to be built. The advertisement produced no result in the first instance. The member for the district then wandered round discussing the matter with what contractors he could find. Finally a tender was put in and two houses were soon under construction. Then two more were found and another contractor was discovered who was willing to tender for them. Then great delay ensued in connection with the supply of materials. The dwellings were to be of weatherboard and asbestos with tiled roofs—most desirable houses when completed. At the same time, I must say that this A2 priority in regard to the supply of materials appears to me to be not so valuable in its application because there was a very great delay in the supply of essential materials and the Government contractor, at least the contractor in the Katanning district, did not appear to be in any better position to get materials than anyone else. In fact, it appeared to me that in some instances he was in a worse position.

It sounds excellent to be able to say that one has an A2 priority, but if it does not operate so as to provide promptly the materials when they are required, it would seem to be preferable to have some other priority or even none at all, judging by the experience of people who have materials available, which they have obtained apparently by lawful means without the aid of the A2 priority. So when I say that out of the ten houses approved in the Katanning district over the last 18 months, four are virtually completed, two are in process of completion but are held up because of the absence of bathroom furniture, which difficulty, I think, has now been removed temporarily, and the other four houses have not yet been started, that will serve to indicate the truth of what I said earlier that even if the local authority did take steps to activate itself in the early stages and answered to the best of its ability the questionnaire and had filled in the necessary applications, it would not necessarily mean that any more speed would have been achieved in the erection of the homes required in the district.

As I said at the beginning of my remarks, I did not rise, and I shall not wish to sit down, as a destructive critic of the Workers' Homes Board because I do not lack appre-

ciation of the difficulties which it has to face; but I do say that difficulties are made to be overcome and there must be found ways and means of expediting the various matters to which I have referred and any others that are acting as brakes on its procedure. If that is not done, we shall never succeed in catching up the lag, to which the Premier referred, of the six war years. If we make no progress in one year, it is reasonable to suppose we shall not make much in the next year and not much more in the second year and the deuce knows when we will be able to meet completely the requirements of the people. If the ukase stands that permits are not to be given to married couples who are in need of housing accommodation, bearing in mind the circumstances I have mentioned, it must be detrimental to the welfare of those people, and I earnestly hope that consideration will be given to that phase in the very near future.

Mr. STYANTS: I wish to say a few words regarding the position on the Goldfields from the standpoint of the erection of houses by the Workers' Homes Board. I think the board is to be congratulated upon the excellent job it has done. True, there is a great demand for homes, not only on the Goldfields but throughout the State. The board in the limited time it has been operating since the cessation of hostilities has performed wonders, and great credit is due to it and the staff for what has been accomplished. The point I wish to bring before the Committee concerns the tremendous cost of the buildings that are being erected by the board and private contractors on the Goldfields. Whereas those costs in the metropolitan area show an increase of 40 per cent. above pre-war rates, the increase on the Goldfields is almost 100 per cent. That makes it very difficult for people who wish to erect homes, even with the liberal conditions provided by the Workers' Homes Board. Members will realise that the repayment conditions provided by the board are much more liberal than could be obtained from any other financial institution or private contractor.

A house that cost pre-war from £480 to £490 with a repayment period of ten years, now costs £845 for practically the same type of dwelling. I appreciate that the Workers' Homes Board and the Government have extended the repayment period to 20 years.

Even so, the repayments are heavy and the deterioration in connection with the type of house that is being built is great in the goldfields areas. The question of needs requires some revision in accordance with the localities to which they apply. I refer to the number of families living in one house. Premises on the Goldfields are not nearly as large or spacious as are dwellings in the metropolitan area. I think it would be quite correct to say that not ten per cent. of the homes on the Goldfields are suitable for accommodating more than one family, even if each family consisted of a man, his wife and one child. On the other hand, in the metropolitan area quite a large percentage of the houses could accommodate comfortably two families with three units in each. On the score of needs I think the type of house available should be taken into consideration, as well as the mere fact that there is more than one family occupying a particular house. The other point I wish to raise concerns a matter to which I referred on previous occasions. That is, a sample home that would probably be more suitable for Goldfields conditions than the orthodox type erected by the Workers' Homes Board in that part of the State.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. STYANTS: Before tea, I was dealing with the possibility of securing a more suitable type of house for the Goldfields than the class of house usually erected there. When speaking on this subject last year or the year before on the Estimates, I suggested that the Principal Architect should be requested to get one of his officers to prepare a plan for a house more suitable to the Goldfields climate, which in wintertime is cold down to freezing point and in summertime frequently reaches 110 degrees or higher, with a great deal of dust. Yet the type of house erected on the Goldfields is similar to that in the metropolitan area or even further south in the State. My idea at the time was that it might be possible to build a house similar to the houses built in Queensland, which are specially designed for a hot climate. I also thought it might be possible to get such a house at a cost much less than the exorbitant price charged for a four-roomed weatherboard and asbestos house—£846.

I do not know what is causing the tremendous increase in the cost of building on the Goldfields over and above the cost in other parts of the State. I know there was competition. Some six or eight contractors tendered for the houses and the Workers' Homes Board accepted the lowest tender; and there was a difference of £150 in the tenders. Some investigation might also be made to ascertain at least the reason for an almost 100 per cent. increase in building costs on the Goldfields; in other portions of the State it is about 40 per cent. The only other matter I wish to touch upon was raised by the Leader of the Opposition. I refer to the restrictions on the granting of homes to married couples, or to married couples with one child—a family unit of three. I wrote to the Premier's Department some 15 months ago on this point and expressed views similar to those expressed by the Leader of the Opposition and by myself when speaking to the Address-in-reply. I realise that in some instances the system works out well, but in other instances it works out very unfairly.

I know of many young couples the male member of which joined the Forces and probably went oversea. In the case of one couple, the wife gave up a good civilian position and joined one of the women's organisations connected with the Defence Forces. By dint of economy and saving they were able to get together some £700 or £800. They have sufficient, without any Government assistance, to get a home of their own; but because they are childless they are precluded from getting the necessary materials. I realise that on the other hand it would work out unfairly in certain instances, as a man with a wife and three or four children ought to be able to get a home. He should not be forced to live with his family in a house occupied by another family. I should quote one case. A young man came out of the Air Force after the cessation of hostilities. He lived in my electorate. He had a certain quantity of cement on hand and, realising there was a shortage of timber and of other building materials, he decided to set about making cement bricks to build his own home. He understood the work and was quite competent to do it. He got his house about half built and then found out that, as there was a shortage of cement and he was a single man—although he gave an assurance that he was to be married in

six weeks' time after leaving the Air Force—he was unable to get additional cement to enable him to make sufficient bricks to complete his home. His home still stands in a half-finished condition in Kalgoorlie today. The walls are half way up, and, although he is now married, he cannot get sufficient cement to complete his house because he has no children.

In that case a great hardship is inflicted. I approached the board on the matter and the board outlined its policy. I also approached the Premier, but the ban remained because the couple had no children; it was only a two unit family. The Workers' Homes Board has recently been investigating the possibility of having bricks made on the Goldfields and I understand the inquiries are still proceeding. I seriously doubt, however, whether brick homes would be suitable on the Goldfields, as they get very hot on a summer's day, when the temperature may reach 108 degrees, and—unlike the wood and asbestos houses or corrugated iron houses—they do not cool off quickly after the sun sets. The result is that they remain hot for the whole 24 hours. As I said, I appreciate the wonderful work that is being done by the Workers' Homes Board. It has a most difficult task to perform and is doing it as well as can reasonably be expected, and better probably than can be expected. Every town in every district throughout the State is clamouring for more houses. I was not satisfied with the position on the Goldfields and doubted whether all the material available was being sent there proportionately; but the position has altered. To the extent that building materials are available, they are being distributed fairly as far as I know. I repeat, the board is doing an excellent job.

MR. NEEDHAM: I agree with the member for Kalgoorlie that the Workers' Homes Board is carrying out an exceedingly difficult task, but when the Premier replies I would like him to give the Committee some information as to what progress has been made by Mr. Wallwork in his investigations into the housing problem. Some considerable time has now elapsed since he was appointed to make the investigations, and I am hoping that he will now be able to give some information respecting the release of materials and the cost of houses. Another phase of the building question is that, in order to cope with the demand for houses

I understand that every encouragement is being given to private builders to erect homes. However, the whole question resolves itself into the release of materials. At the time when Mr. Wallwork was appointed to make inquiries, it was thought that the release of materials was not altogether in the hands of the Government and that perhaps some other influence was at work which prevented the supply. The three phases I would like the Premier to inform the Committee on are, first, what progress is being made by Mr. Wallwork with his investigations, and when the Government is likely to have a report from him; second, whether there could be an acceleration in the issue of building permits; and third, whether there is any likelihood of a reduction in the cost of the homes. It must be realised that the present cost of houses is somewhat in excess of what workers can afford to pay.

Mr. McDONALD: It would be a platitude to say that this matter of housing has assumed a basic importance as a social question. My intention has been, like that of the member for Perth, to inquire from the Premier when Mr. Wallwork would be likely to make his report on the housing question. There is no doubt that the progress in housing is much slower than we would like to see. I admit the difficulties involved and the difficulties that confront the Workers' Homes Board; and whether it could do more or proceed on different lines and get results may be indicated possibly by the report of Mr. Wallwork. There are a number of features for which a quite adequate explanation may be forthcoming. But some questions are agitating the public mind. To the knowledge of all of us, shop improvements and extensions are being carried out. These cause people to inquire how the owners can get priorities for materials while homes are still in so much demand. In some cases we note that additions are being made to commercial premises, no doubt quite justifiably, in the ordinary way; but these again raise the question why the owners should have permission to proceed with fairly extensive additions or alterations while people in urgent need are unable to get a permit for building materials.

There are many factors involved in this thorny question, but I have no intention of trying to traverse them. I do hope that Mr. Wallwork's report will be comprehen-

sive, that it will deal with realities and be couched in plain terms. Difficulties that will be known to members have arisen in the building trade. Today we have the builder who works at week-ends. He undertakes a comparatively small job that will last for three or four week-ends and gets paid at very good rates. By some means, possibly legitimate, materials are forthcoming, and it is not at all certain that the money he gets will be accounted for in taxation returns. He generally has a lump-sum contract by which he receives a set figure for the job. The result, I am told, is that regular builders find some difficulty in getting continuity of labour because the pressure from the public to get jobs done means that there is an attractive field for regular workers in the building trade to absent themselves from the job on which they are normally engaged in order to take part in some building work on their own account. This, I believe, is an embarrassment to contractors, firstly, because it delays the completion of the job, and secondly because it creates an unknown factor regarding costs. As a result, contractors become reluctant to tender because their labour difficulties may mean that their costs will exceed the estimated amount.

I have been told—I do not vouch for the truth of this—that there are builders capable of entering the building trade but who are abstaining from so doing because of the difficulties in the way of labour and materials, and the uncertainty, when tendering, of knowing whether the amount they submit will cover the actual costs with which they will be finally faced. There are also some social aspects not without importance in connection with priorities. We have listened to the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition regarding the married couple without children. I fully appreciate the position of the married couple with a family who are needing added accommodation. I am not so sure at this stage whether the case of the young married couple who are unable to get a house in which to live, or even that of the young engaged couple who defer their marriage because they cannot get a house, is not such as to justify a review of their priority to acquire a home. I hope that the Workers' Homes Board, and possibly Mr. Wallwork, will do the Committee the compliment of reading the remarks of members on this discussion. If

the board or Mr. Wallwork would like some information on the question of the difficulties of young married couples, I would be prepared to supply a source from which inquiries could be made and from which some facts, which have been supplied to me, could be gathered.

I also suggest to the Government that it might, either in connection with this report or as a further field of inquiry, commission Mr. Wallwork to go into the question of the landlord and tenant laws. That is a matter which caused some discussion when a continuation Bill was before the House a week or two ago. It is urgent that landlord and tenant matters should be carefully examined in the interests of both the homeowners and the tenants. The position has now arisen under which the existing regulations affecting tenancies are exploited, or can be exploited, by both sides. There are injustices in each case which might well be removed. While Mr. Wallwork is investigating the associated matters of house building and the priorities of people who desire to obtain houses, it would not be a great step for him to address his mind to any desirable amendments to our landlord and tenant laws. I hope the Minister will give some consideration to that suggestion. Residential housing has been an insoluble problem in all countries for many years.

The question of building a house which can be bought or rented at an economic rent, having regard to the tenant, is one which does not seem to have been solved. Costs are too high compared to the wages or salaries, and the result is that the rent is too great and consumes too large a proportion of the income of the tenant. We have taken a step, by our recent legislation, to formulate an economic rent with the result that the tenant is subsidised by the Government, or the taxpayer, in order to meet that part of his rent which exceeds a certain proportion of his income. But that is merely a symptom and something that is not sound; it is something which ought to be overcome if it is at all possible. So I hope that Mr. Wallwork, in his inquiries, will address some attention to the basic causes, at the present time in particular, of the very high cost of houses and, consequently, the high cost of rent. I hope, too, that he will consider how far that problem might be removed by encouraging a larger daily output by all the people concerned not only in

the building of houses but also in the production of the necessary materials. That is entering on a matter for industrial examination, but it is fairly obvious that if there can be any great percentage increase in the output of materials for the same cost, then the cost of houses and the rent of the working men who occupy them, might be brought down 20 or 25 per cent., and make all the difference to their standard of living.

We should not be afraid to face this aspect in the course of our inquiries. I think also we should not be afraid to face the question whether our methods are efficient. That applies to the contractors as well as to all the other people engaged in the building trade and in the production of materials, including the producers in the timber areas, the producers of bricks and the producers of household fittings and other requirements. Are they using the most efficient methods to get the maximum output for the minimum cost? These, perhaps, are extensive matters but they are basic in meeting the difficulties involved. While it is a big burden on one man, who is asked to get out a report with no great delay, it is well worth while to spend some time in attacking what is a difficulty seriously affecting so many people.

Mr. TELFER: I wish to congratulate the Workers' Homes Board on its efforts, to a certain extent, but I also wish to support the remarks of the members for Kalgoorlie and West Perth when they spoke of the younger people wishing to marry and of those already married and who have no children. The difficulties they mentioned also arise in the farming areas. Many sons of farmers wish to marry and desire to build on their parents' property. If they cannot be given permits for building materials, it means that they, who are potential farmers, will drift from the farms.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: They can live in tents.

Mr. TELFER: The hon. member can speak for herself. Something should be done to relieve this necessity. I feel that rules and regulations should not be cast-iron but elastic on this point.

Mr. FOX: The Workers' Homes Board is doing an excellent job in the circumstances. I have interviewed the secretary of the board on numerous occasions about providing homes for people who wish to marry, and I

pointed out to him what a good thing it would be for the State if all those young people could be given homes instead of having to wait several years before deciding to commit matrimony. Most young men do not like to bring their wives home to live with their parents, and vice versa. Also, it is not fair that an elderly couple, after having reared a family, should have young people in the house to upset the quiet of the evening of their days. The Workers' Homes Board should give some consideration to the position of people under 30 years of age who desire a home. The question of people who have no possibility of increasing the population is not so important. We want people in this State and every potential mother and father should be given the earliest opportunity to acquire a home.

There may be some building going on in the metropolitan area that could really have waited for a while. I refer to some small shops that are being erected, but I do not think they have had a very big effect on the housing problem. The Leader of the Liberal Party mentioned building work that had been done on commercial premises. I made some inquiries into that aspect also. I was not satisfied as to an extra storey being put on a large warehouse in Fremantle. I interviewed the Minister for Works about it, and he said, "That firm is putting the extra storey on in order to begin manufacturing and thus give work to men returning from the Forces, and to other people as well." That was quite a plausible explanation and a really good one. Perhaps I should not have used the word "plausible".

Mr. Watts: It will not hurt the Minister for Works.

Mr. FOX: There are many people in the metropolitan area living three and four in a room. I do not know how we are going to better their conditions until we get a bigger supply of materials. The shortage of timber will prevent us doing all we would like to do. I noticed that the New Zealand Government advertised recently for timber workers, and particularly for fallers. If that Government makes the industry more attractive in New Zealand than we are able to make it in Australia, there is great danger of losing some of our timberworkers to that Dominion, and we cannot afford to lose them, particularly the fallers. Falling is one

of the hardest classes of work in the industry.

While in the timber country recently I spoke to a young man—he was about 6 feet high—who told me that his wages were the second highest in the group of fallers with which he was associated, but that after taking out working expenses, the cost of his tools, replacements and so on, he averaged £7 per week. That is not a high wage for a leading man in such an important industry. He said he was going to leave the industry, and he has done so. He told me that he was not able to make sufficient wages for the energy expended and that he could do much better in a lighter job, even if he did not receive £7 per week. I do not suppose that private employers will make the industry more attractive, but the Government will have to do so. I think I have done as much labouring work as has anyone in this Chamber, but I would not like to do the work in the timber industry that such men are doing at the present time, for very little over the basic wage. That aspect of the matter must receive attention if we are to continue building houses.

In common with other speakers, I believe that the cost of houses to the workers is too high. What chance has the man, earning a margin over the basic wage, of owning a home within his lifetime? None at all! He had little chance when he paid £700 for a house, so he has less chance now. The only way to overcome the difficulty is to cut down the interest rate. In the past, in order to buy a house, one had to pay the cost of about three houses, owing to the interest charged. I trust the Premier will give that matter consideration, and see if the interest rate can be reduced to a minimum. I do not see why the Commonwealth Government cannot afford to allow the Workers' Homes Board to have money at the cost of administration. If that were done it would compensate in some degree for the high cost of houses to the workers.

Mr. Thorn: We could cut the taxation, also.

Mr. FOX: Mr. Menzies will not be able to do that, now.

The PREMIER: I appreciate the approach made by members to this subject. As I intimated earlier, I intend during the coming week to introduce a Bill to consolidate the present statutes, with some amendments.

At that time I propose to give the House a complete review of the situation. As to the inquiry made by Mr. Wallwork, that is a progressive matter and, although from time to time the Government will receive interim reports, it may be a considerable time before ultimate conclusions are reached and the matter is ready for a complete review and a final report. In the meantime, Mr. Wallwork's inquiries have been directed to matters that are causing great concern at the moment, particularly the availability of materials. Recently an officer, working in conjunction with Mr. Wallwork, was detailed to make inquiries regarding essential materials obtainable only from other States. His visit extended as far as Brisbane, dealing with the availability of plywood. The difficulties of obtaining that commodity are not easy to overcome.

We have been generously treated in the matter of manufactured materials, particularly porcelain ware, by those responsible for the allocation and responsible for the shipping space available to us, but the whole question bristles with difficulties. When one looks at the production of commodities essential to home building, comparing the position with pre-war days, and particularly with the years from 1936 to 1939, it is astounding to see how seriously the diminution in production has affected the home-building programme of today. When that is coupled with the six years' lag, which means that in all of Australia a very small number of homes was built in any State—with one exception—one can see how seriously it is likely to affect us for some time to come. To those members who stated a case on behalf of the newly married and those about to marry, I would point out that the quantities of materials of all kinds, and the number of tradesmen and artisans in various industries associated with or kindred to the building industry, are limited.

When one considers the number of workmen in all States that seems to be available one must realise that to agree to any great variation of the present system would mean that the most needy, those with the largest families, would take second place to the newly weds. I do not think any member would sponsor too strongly a case against those most sorely in need, but at the same time I have asked the board to furnish me with a report, as quickly as possible, on what

may be regarded as a variation of the present circumstances that affect priorities, to see whether we can allocate at least a proportion in any one year to those who have fewer responsibilities in comparison with those having greater family responsibilities.

I appreciate the manner in which members have approached this subject, the question of material supply, and also the matter of shops and business premises. Much of the difficulty in that direction is associated with the limitations that were increased by the demand of the Legislative Council—the Bill passed this Chamber—when sums were rigidly adhered to. I refer to the £50 for materials. In certain circumstances those limits were doubled. Members know what transpired. In the aggregate those smaller quantities, of £50 to £100 worth of materials without permits, represented tremendous quantities, just as the lag between the lifting of control by the Commonwealth Government for one month in the matter of the £1200 limit, and the re-introducing of the control, meant to us a decrease, in essential buildings available and able to be catered for, of 10 per cent. during last year. There are many influences that are interwoven and which affect this subject considerably, but I hope, with all other members, that we will get a better perspective once the matter has been thoroughly reported on.

Mr. THORN: The Premier mentioned married couples without families, and young couples about to become engaged. Is it a fact that each month a quota of houses is allotted to the architects of Perth for re-allotment?

The Premier: That question has already been answered. There is no foundation whatever for the statement. Every individual case is considered by the board on its merits.

Mr. THORN: I know that houses are allotted to young couples without families, through the architects, and that such couples are saddled with an architect's fee of from £60 to £100, which is added to the cost of the home. I know at present of one couple who are building an ordinary weatherboard home with a tiled roof. It will cost £1150 by the time they have paid the architect's fees. It is being built privately. Each month a quota of homes is allotted to the Architects' Association of Perth and those

homes are either drawn for or are allotted, and young couples are saddled with the architect's fees.

Mr. Fox: You will find that other people besides young couples are going to live in those homes.

Mr. THORN: The member for Kalgoolie mentioned the cost of homes tonight. It is our duty to bring that cost within the reach of the man who has a small margin above the basic wage. Such people should not be saddled with architects' fees. Surely the Government Architect could have a range of plans for suitable homes made available to young couples, without any fees. Someone closely connected with me has been allotted a home. This couple have no family and they have to pay the architect's fee. That is why I raised the question.

The Premier: Whatever is being done in that way is being done illicitly. I would like to have information about it.

Mr. THORN: I will give the Premier that information.

The PREMIER: No home is allotted except with the approval of the board and the plans must be approved, so irrespective of whether a person is dealing direct under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, or under the War Services Homes conditions, or whether the plans are approved by a local authority and submitted to the board on behalf of builders or architects, they all follow the same course. In this one case there is apparently something on which I would like further information.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Superannuation Board, £3,180:

Hon. N. KEENAN: It is my intention on this Vote to invite a statement from the Premier as to the policy of the administrators of the Superannuation Act where a contributor is retired on account of infirmity which is not due to any fault of his own. Under the Act, when a contributor is retired because of physical disability or infirmity, not produced by his own act, he is entitled to the full pension. Under a subsection of the same section, it is provided that if he is capable of discharging other work that does not require such physical ability as he is deficient in, he may be called upon to accept the other work. The question of importance to the contributor

is this: Is the other work to be paid for at the rate of the work he was employed at when he became physically incapable?

I have a case in point. A man became physically incapable through an accident which occurred in the course of his industry. He was an engineer of the highest grade. After proper medical inquiry, he was declared to be entitled to the full pension. He has now been offered employment of the nature of that of a common labourer. Obviously if he accepted it, he would receive considerably less pay than he was earning before his accident. The matter has become further complicated by the fact that if he gets his pension and devotes his spare time, as he has been doing to conducting a light business, he is able to obtain from both sources the equivalent of what he earned when he was fully employed.

I should like the Premier to say whether, if a contributor is debarred from carrying on his work by means of infirmity for which he is not responsible and therefore entitled to full pension, he may be offered other employment at a very much lower rate of pay and must devote all his time to the pursuit of that employment, thus reducing his standard of living considerably. I should like an assurance from the Premier that the matter will be inquired into, because it would mean a big difference in the value of superannuation. When a public servant subscribes to superannuation, he enters into a contract, and the contract is that if he pays his proportion, the State will pay its proportion when the liability arises. It appears, however, from the present policy of the board that the liability can be avoided, as I have described.

The PREMIER: The section of the Act to which the hon. member refers is one that was amended by the amending measure of last year. In making that variation to the original section, the board was given discretionary power in certain cases, because it had been proved that in some instances the board and all subscribing to it were being taken in by people whose claims were not just and valid. In giving that discretionary power to the board, there may be cases in which it operates harshly. I would like to have particulars of the case mentioned by the hon. member so that I may have the whole matter inquired into. No set policy is

observed, and the matter would be in the main at the discretion of the board.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Printing, £97,511:

MR. McLARTY: I pay a tribute to the Government Printing Office for the efficient manner in which the work is carried out. Particularly was this so during the war years when considerable difficulties were experienced. Despite that fact, "Hansard" reports, Bills, departmental reports and all printing matter was most efficiently executed, and it is fitting that we should pay tribute to the work of the department. Could the Premier arrange for the weekly numbers of "Hansard" to be made available to members on Tuesday instead of Wednesday in each week? Previously the weekly number was received on Tuesday, and it was very helpful to members to have it on that day, but now we do not get it until the House meets at 4.30 p.m. on Wednesday. If possible, will the Premier revert to the pre-war order and have the weekly number made available on Tuesday?

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Tourist Bureau, £11,900:

MR. WILLMOTT (Sussex) [8.25]: I am pleased to see an increase in this Vote of £9,000 odd. Most of it will be expended on publicity. Will the Premier inform us of the nature of this publicity? I hope it is being carried on not only in this State and in the Commonwealth, but also in other countries. We have a wonderful State and, if it is advertised in the right way, tourist traffic would prove highly beneficial.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [8.26]: Last session and the session before motions were carried dealing with tourist traffic, and since then the Government has appointed an officer to take charge of the department. I should like to know how the Premier's Department is linking up with the general tourist plans of the Commonwealth and even of other countries. According to the Press this morning, Australia is represented in some international plan for organising and standardising tourist arrangements in the way of hotels, fares, etc. We should not confine our tourist activities to local traffic, which seems to be the general plan at pre-

sent. There are great opportunities to attract tourists from overseas, and we would be unwise not to plan for them.

Many remarks have been made recently by Americans and others of the need for modern hotels and better transport arrangements, etc. When suggestions are made for improving transport arrangements, they are often opposed on other grounds, the fact being ignored that if we are to foster tourist traffic we must conform to international standards. It may be said that private enterprise should provide up-to-date hotels and similar requirements, but there is room for a directing authority through the Premier's Department. Tourist traffic can be made an important source of revenue. Figures recently quoted in the Press showed that Canada is obtaining an income from tourist traffic equivalent to that obtained from her wheat exports. Canada has attractions and developments that we have not got, but we have many attractions that would appeal to tourists.

The G.P.O. in Great Britain has been approached by a plane service with an offer to run planes from London to Perth in 24 hours. Thus we are now right in the world, and we would be very unwise not to cater for tourist traffic. This traffic brings revenue without any deduction, and the outlay involved in effecting necessary improvements would be a mere bagatelle as compared with the return, because the customers are rich, the profit is immediate and there is no need to incur bad debts. Of course the Government cannot be expected to launch out in a big way immediately, but there is information that could be obtained. I should like the Premier to send one of his tourist officers across the world to get information about this traffic. We should find out the needs of prospective tourists and ascertain what we would have to do to make our State worthy of this bigger traffic. Nobody can deny that the work at present is on a modest basis.

I am sure the whole Chamber will support what Mr. Miller is doing. I think the tours he has instituted are conducted on efficient lines and that they will expand. I am sure, too, that he has many other sound plans in mind. But we cannot ignore the possibilities lying ahead, particularly when we realise that Canberra is in control of our finances. If we can, by organised planning and the encouragement of private enterprise of the right sort—even inducing overseas enterprise to come here and engage in this business—

if we can thus build up our revenue to £500,000 or £1,000,000 more than it is now, that would be handy to Western Australia in the next decade. I have pleasure in supporting the Vote. The Premier has provided a definite increase in the amount, but I will urge him to go further and make more plans for the future and realise that in the long run Western Australia may have, in the tourist industry, something greater than its gold, asbestos, and other primary industries.

MR. OWEN (Swan) [8.32]: There is no doubt that Western Australia offers great opportunities for the tourist trade, and it is rather pleasing to know that the Government Tourist Bureau has been revitalised to undertake the publicity necessary to attract tourists. Quite a lot has been done in organising local tours and in having films taken to advertise our scenery and industries both in other States and overseas. The scenery in Western Australia, though perhaps not unique, is rather different from that to be found in other parts of the world; and our activities, too, are somewhat different. I think we could do much more to attract tourists. As the member for Claremont said, the present does not seem to be the opportune time to incur the expense necessary to provide proper accommodation. But until we do offer suitable accommodation, we will not get very far in attracting tourists from abroad. Within the State, we can offer tourist attractions for the local people and also for those coming from further afield. I have spoken to quite a number of people who have been to the North-West during the winter and they refer to the glorious climate there compared with the colder and wetter weather experienced down here during the season. I consider that in a few years' time it will be an accepted thing amongst the well-to-do to travel north for the winter period. It is only a matter of providing additional accommodation and suitable means of travel. Even now we have quite a fair aerial service, and it would be easy for tourists to leave Perth in the morning and arrive the same day at some of the North-West places that offer suitable tourist attractions, and stay there for the weeks or months they wish to be away from home.

The South-West, too, is a paradise for tourists, but there again we must offer accommodation before we can induce people

to visit that area. It was mentioned in this House a few weeks ago that Cave House is always booked to capacity. I consider there is room for dozens of Cave Houses throughout the South-West and other parts of the State. I would like to suggest what might be done with regard to the South-West. We have read recently in the paper of the itinerary of the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester. At one stage they will be staying at a bush camp in the tourist region. I think that a bush camp, properly organised, would be a great attraction to city dwellers within the State and to tourists from overseas. The Americans have exploited the wild west atmosphere in their so-called dude ranches. Why cannot we have our dude bush camps? When the Duke and Duchess have gone away, the camp that was prepared for them could be made available for tourists. I am sure the project would take on, and that the camp would be packed to capacity throughout the summer months.

Speaking of tourists and tourist attractions, I cannot let the occasion pass without referring to my own electorate and mentioning what we have there in the way of scenic drives close to Perth. In my first speech in this Chamber I mentioned the possibility of exploiting the one-day tourists who, in the pre-war days, came and went on the mail boats, which used to remain in Fremantle for 12 hours two days a week. Within 25 miles of Perth in the hills there are some of the best drives one could find in the State and there are within convenient distance several hotels that are suitable for and do cater for the needs of the tourist public. There is an excellent drive from Perth through National Park just off the Great Eastern highway to Mundaring and Mundaring Weir. Mundaring Weir has always been a centre of tourist traffic and always will be. There is a good hotel and the proprietor has always catered for tourists. During his life as a hotel-keeper he has studied the position, and at various times has been in communication with all the leading hotels in Europe. He can give quite a lot of information on the way to set up a hotel to provide satisfaction for the guests.

From Mundaring there is quite a good—almost a main—road to Kalamunda, where there is another good hotel. Then one can proceed through the Bickley Valley and out through Karragullen to Araluen

and Canning Dam. One can return thence via the Albany road. There is a good hotel at Armadale en route. That tour would be a 50-mile drive. For those who do not wish to go the whole way, there are many short cuts by which they might return to Perth. They could travel via Kalamunda and Guildford or via Lesmurdie or Kelmscott. If these drives were advertised a little more it would be possible to run parlour coaches or tourist buses every day of the week. The roads are quite good. In fact, they are main roads most of the way. It is hoped that within the coming year the roads that were formed before the war but not bituminised will be suitably surfaced.

I commend to the Government the fostering of the tourist trade to the utmost extent, and suggest that as soon as possible, without restricting the building of houses, it should erect or encourage private industry to erect suitable tourist hotels or hostels throughout the State wherever opportunity offers in order that tourists may be provided with accommodation and thus be able to enjoy our tourist attractions. I have much pleasure in supporting the Vote and I hope an increasing amount will be spent in years to come.

MRS. CARDELL-OLIVER (Subiaco) [8.41]: I had no intention of speaking on this Vote; but after having listened to the eulogistic remarks of so many members about the wonderful amenities that can be had in Western Australia, I must relate a few of my experiences. I am an old-world traveller, and I think that some members have gone ahead of what we can really do in this State. We have heard from the previous two or three speakers of the wonderful things that Western Australia can provide, but the first question that arises is: Where can one get accommodation in any place in Western Australia, unless one books from three to six months ahead?

Mr. Fox: You could sleep out!

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: Sleep out, be bothered! Who wants to sleep out in the North-West with all the mosquitoes and the sand flies? I visited the North-West; and if the hon. member had been acquainted with the sand flies, as I was, he would not want to go there. One cannot obtain accommodation in the North-West; or if one

does, it is in a place which is ant-eaten and if one is not careful one is likely to go through the floor. On one occasion the member for Mt. Hawthorn had that experience. His leg did go through the floor at one hotel; and I can assure members, because I have recently been there, that with my weight I had to be very careful that I did not go through the boards. The member for Mt. Hawthorn did have that experience and his leg appeared through the floor into the dining-room! I did not happen to do that. If we are going to have tourist trade in this State, we must provide decent accommodation for the people. I agree that in the North-West we have a wonderful climate in the winter. It is a winter resort, but there must be decent accommodation. I do not know much about the South-West. I only know that a little while ago I went down there and I was told, "There is no place for you here. You cannot sleep here tonight." There were 24 bedrooms in that hotel and only three were occupied.

The Minister for Works: Was that at Pinjarra?

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: No, it was not! Although there were 24 bedrooms, only three were occupied and yet I could not get accommodation. Why? There was no service in the hotels. I do not blame the hotelkeepers. I found that there was the hotelkeeper and his wife, and they were without any servants at all. They could not possibly accommodate the public. We talk about tourists coming here! First of all we must provide for their accommodation and then we must provide the necessary service. There is one point about the North-West. There were plenty of tourists on the boat but when they reached the towns along the coast there was no place where they could stay. All the hotels were filled to overflowing. Of course, I shall support the Vote because we must try to encourage tourists to come to Western Australia, but the Minister must first see to it that accommodation is provided and that the necessary service is available.

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gaseoyne) [8.46]: I think hon. members are almost inducing me to become profligate with the State finances.

Mr. Watts: And loquacious!

The PREMIER: Members know that we have increased tourist Votes for the past two years. That has been done quite deliberately by the Government, which regarded it as progressively a matter of investment for this State. In this instance, we are fortunate in our selection of the Director of the Tourist Bureau. He is a man of ideas and of great energy. He has already, with regard to publicity and photography, revived and restored the position so that we shall be able shortly to do justice to the many attractions that this State has to sell. I feel it is not outside the bounds of possibility for this State to sell £1,000,000 worth of its invisible exports to people coming to this State. If that be so, any inducement the Government can give to stimulate the tourist traffic will be offered. I do not know whether members have seen the film first exhibited in Perth recently. It was one of a series contributed to by this State and by other States for exhibition here and overseas. The first series depicts Perth in a splendid manner, not only from the standpoint of the photography but of the descriptive matter on the soundtrack.

The exhibition of the film is not under the direction of the Government but is in the hands of the circuit which controls the Grand Theatre and its associated houses. I understand it is being shown in four or five theatres, and I think it is absolutely the best picture of its kind I have seen exhibited in Western Australia. The film is one of a series that will not only show the nature and beauties of this country but will deal with its industries and developmental activities such as our public works, water supplies, and the like. With regard to publicity and publications that matter is also in hand because it is necessary for us to have up-to-date literature in that direction. I am very heartened to note that members, in spite of the tremendous increase in this Vote, are in support of it. Only three years ago, £400 was spent in connection with the department during the war period, whereas the Vote is now in excess of £9,000, and I hope there will be a further increase next year.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Literary and Scientific Grants, etc., £11,834—agreed to.

Vote—Miscellaneous Services, £1,101,661:

Item, Parks, Recreation grounds, etc., £5,350; and

Item, School sites, purchase of, including title fees, surveys, etc., £2,000.

Mr. McLARTY: I would like some information regarding these two items. The former, dealing with parks, recreation grounds, etc., refers apparently to those in the metropolitan area. Will the Premier say whether any money could be made available for expenditure in connection with some country towns that have not any reserves at all at present? It seems to me that unless those centres secure some reserves now, they will not get them in the future. The places I have in mind are growing rapidly, but they have no grounds set aside for recreation purposes and very little for camping sites. If help is provided for recreational grounds in the metropolitan area, I suggest similar assistance should be made available to the townships I have in mind. There are a few only. Most of the townsites were surveyed by the Government which originally owned the land, but under the old titles the land in the early days was privately owned, with a result that no provision was made for recreation grounds.

The PREMIER: The first item referred to deals with the maintenance and improvement of reserves such as King's Park and Point Walter and also such work as is being done on the foreshore at Crawley and elsewhere, for which the Premier's Department is responsible. As to extending assistance to country districts, I have in mind some possibility in connection with the Tourist Bureau. If local authorities find that they have reserves likely to attract tourists but which are undeveloped, the Government might be prepared to give consideration to any approaches made by such local bodies, particularly where the improvement of the reserves would be beyond the capacity of the local authorities.

Dealing with the second item relating to the purchase of school sites, members, if they refer to the Estimates over the years, will find that the Vote varies considerably according to needs and requirements, particularly in country districts. The expenditure last year included the purchase of school sites at Armadale and at other South-West towns. Unfortunately, at this stage of the history of the State, which is very little

over a hundred years old, it is found that no provision has been made in many instances for the future in respect of land held by the Crown. The tendency in the public mind wherever the broad arrow appears on a map is to see that the area passes into private possession. The Crown is in need of hundreds of thousands of acres more in the shape of reserves for State purposes. On the other hand, we have members—I do not think the member for Murray-Wellington is entirely innocent in this respect—who want reserves ceded from Crown possessions.

Mr. McLarty: No, I agree with you there.

The PREMIER: It is necessary for State purposes that these areas shall be procured.

Item, Expenditure as may be necessary owing to war conditions, £30,000.

Mr. THORN: The amount involved in this item is large and last year's Vote of £122,000 was exceeded by £16,000. Will the Premier explain what this item refers to?

The PREMIER: The item covers expenditure such as annual long service and military leave to members of the Public Service. It includes railway fares and military concessions to soldiers on leave and those returning to their homes prior to discharge. It includes the superannuation contributions of members of the Forces who are public servants, and all such things incidental to, and consequent upon, the war. The Vote last year covered the emergency stocks of food in all parts of the State, A.R.P. expenditure and all things incidental to the war.

Item, Recoup Rural Bank, Government agency section, £50,000.

Mr. LESLIE: Will the Premier inform the Committee whether this item is in connection with the establishment of the Rural and Industries Bank or does it refer to amounts written off in connection with the Rural Bank? Does it concern the accounts in the Government agency section? Have the amounts been written off altogether, or are they included in the bank's books?

The PREMIER: Under the Rural and Industries Bank Account, the agency section undertakes work on behalf of the Government, which includes all accounts which were not able to stand on their own feet at the time of the initiation of the bank. In respect of the work undertaken by the

agency section for the Government, the Government has to make good the cost of the administration of those accounts and any losses which otherwise would be incurred by that instrumentality. The item has no reference whatever to the cost of the establishment of the bank.

Vote put and passed.

[Mr. Mann took the Chair.]

Vote — Public Works and Buildings, £264,123;

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [8.58]: During the last 12 months a considerable number of permanent officers of the Public Works Department have been demobilised from the Services and have returned to duty in the different sections of the department. For the most part, these officers have been key men in the department and their return to duty has permitted a substantial speeding up in the general activities associated with public works in this State. As members will know, the Stirling Dam in the Harvey district was commenced before the war began and a fair amount of progress was made with that undertaking before work on it had to be abandoned owing to the outbreak of hostilities. During the last nine or ten months, operations have been resumed on a fairly large scale until today there are approximately 500 men employed there. This does not mean that the work in connection with the completion of the dam is being carried out under the old pick-and-shovel method that applied to a considerable extent before the war. The most up-to-date earth-moving and earth-spreading equipment has been located at the dam and a great deal of manual labour has consequently been dispensed with.

This dam is required to increase the storage capacity of water in the South-West for irrigation purposes. Initially the departmental officers had a great struggle to convince settlers in the South-West of the undoubted benefits that would arise if an irrigation system were established in that part of the State. At the time there was much opposition to the proposal. Leading officers of the department travelled from farm to farm and from district to district in an endeavour to break down the hostility

that had developed in the minds of many of the landowners. Gradually the opposition was broken down until a majority of the landowners agreed to the establishment of irrigation schemes and to the reticulation of water from the storages to the individual farms.

As an indication of how opinion has changed, only a few weeks ago I received a deputation of settlers in the Benger district requesting the very opposite of what they had requested some four or five years previously. On the first occasion they asked the then Minister for Works, Hon. H. Millington, not under any consideration to provide irrigation facilities in that district. When they came recently to me, they strongly requested that everything they had put up at a previous deputation be washed out and that they should be given the benefit that irrigation facilities undoubtedly provide.

The Stirling Dam is a very big undertaking. When completed it will store a great quantity of water which will be available for the irrigation of additional areas of land in the Harvey and surrounding districts. The proposal of the Government to raise considerably the height of the retaining wall of the Wellington Dam will enable additional water to be impounded in that dam not only to serve the proposed comprehensive scheme for agricultural areas but, what is equally important, also to make available greatly increased quantities of water for irrigation purposes in the Brunswick, Roelands and Collie areas.

Mr. North: Has that scheme met with approval from the Commonwealth?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The application to the Loan Council for approval to raise the money has received Federal approval, but perhaps the hon. member has in mind the proposed comprehensive water supply scheme for country towns and agricultural areas and whether this has yet received Federal approval in the form of a grant from the Commonwealth. I will deal with that matter in a few moments. The provision of irrigation services in the South-West has undoubtedly greatly increased production there. The most important benefit from irrigation is that it enables a much increased production of wealth from the same area of land. Farmers are able on very small holdings to produce large quantities

of wealth and to go on producing practically all the year round. If there is one thing more than another that this State needs, it is intense cultivation and closer settlement to the greatest possible degree. This is far preferable to any wholesale attempt to open up completely new areas of land. It is far cheaper for the Government and for everyone concerned to cultivate land intensely in districts already served by public utilities such as railways, roads, schools, hospitals, telegraph and postal facilities and other amenities that make community life not only possible but also reasonably comfortable and attractive. I imagine that there will be nothing but approval for the increased activities the Government is undertaking for the storage of more water for irrigation and the provision of irrigation facilities for increased areas of land.

Some few months ago the State made representations to the Commonwealth Government for a financial grant for the proposed large-scale water supply scheme for country towns and agricultural areas. The estimated total cost of the scheme is £10,000,000 and it has been planned to serve at least 10,000,000 acres of land, plus a considerable number of country towns in the Great Southern districts and also in the north-eastern agricultural areas. The Prime Minister, when the State's request was put to him, was extremely interested and reasonably sympathetic. Naturally he wanted to be assured by the expert officers of the Commonwealth that the scheme was well-based technically, that on the economic side it was justified, and that financially there was a reasonable prospect of its giving a fair return to the State, directly as well as indirectly.

The Prime Minister appointed a special Commonwealth committee which will visit Western Australia this month. Already Mr. Loader, of the Commonwealth Works Department, has been in the State in connection with this matter. Last week he met at Narrogin representatives of the local governing authorities in the Great Southern areas, and discussed various phases of the proposed scheme with them. I understand from the Director of Works, Mr. Dumas, who was present, that the representatives of the local governing authorities were unanimous in their approval of the scheme, and gave Mr. Loader to understand that they

were anxious for the scheme to be proceeded with as quickly as possible in order that its benefits might be available in the shortest period of time. When the full Commonwealth committee comes to this State, it will visit most of the districts concerned and will meet the local people, including the settlers, and discuss with them in detail their views on the scheme.

The sources of supply for this proposed scheme will be the Wellington Dam near Collic and the Mundaring Reservoir, the location of which is known to everybody. The retaining wall at the Mundaring Reservoir will be raised some 35 feet and the holding capacity of the reservoir will be increased at least threefold. The wall of the Wellington Dam will be raised about four times its present height and the holding capacity of the dam will be increased at least fourfold. In effect, the raising of the Mundaring Dam retaining wall three times its present height will be equal to the building of two additional Mundaring reservoirs. That, I suggest, is an undertaking of great magnitude and one which, when completed, should be of tremendous value as well to the farming areas and country towns as to the goldmining industry, which is now expanding and which we all feel sure will expand still more as the years go by.

The raising of the retaining wall at the Wellington Dam, will, in effect, be the equal of three Wellington Dams. Therefore, these proposed undertakings are of great importance and will prove to be of great advantage to the State in years to come. Work at Mundaring has already commenced and at present approximately 80 men are employed there. This work is largely of a preliminary character and will be so for some months, mainly because of the present difficulty in obtaining the supplies of cement that will be required in the more important work associated with the raising of the retaining wall. Naturally, we do not want work of this character to compete with the house-building programme of the State at this stage and therefore we have planned the undertaking in such a way as to enable practically all the work for the first 12 months to be carried out so as to compete only to a minimum degree with the State's housing programme. However, when the time arrives that cement supplies are available in considerable quantities the work of raising the wall will be pushed ahead with all possible speed. The

same procedure will of course apply to the raising of the retaining wall at the Wellington Dam.

During the past year, the Government through the Public Works Department has also given a considerable amount of attention to the question of improving existing water supplies in country towns and to plans for the establishment of new water supplies in a number of country towns at present not supplied. Naturally, every country town that has a water supply which is not adequate wants it increased; and every country town that has no water supply at all wants to see one established. It is not possible for the department in one year to meet every such request. Therefore, most of the requests have either to be refused or postponed and consequently there is always considerable danger of misunderstandings arising, the people in each town thinking their claim to be the most urgent and the most important. They cannot, as a rule, think it possible that some other community in some other part of the State has a more urgent or better claim.

That reminds me, if I might take up two or three minutes, of a deputation that waited on the Hon. P. Collier some years ago when he was Premier. He was travelling on the North-Eastern Goldfield and had had a very hard, heavy day. The temperature was about 106 degrees in the shade and the last deputation that waited upon him did so at half-past five in the afternoon. He was very weary and found it difficult to keep his eyes open while the local people were making their request. The request was from a very small place called Hawk's Nest, situated, I think, between Morgans and Laverton, and was for a school to be built there for the benefit of the 10 or 12 children in the locality. The last speaker had a very loud voice. He had noticed that Mr. Collier appeared to have his eyes closed during the whole deputation, and in his loud voice he went on to explain the case. He awakened Mr. Collier completely by saying that, although the small place of Hawk's Nest might not mean very much to the Premier of Western Australia, it meant the whole damn world to all the people who were living there. That applies to some extent to every request that is made by every locality to the Government; it matters not whether the request is for a water supply, roads, schools or hospitals, the local com-

munity making the request always feels that it is the most justifiable of all the requests put up in the State.

The Government will proceed in the near future with water supplies for two or three country towns and, as circumstances permit, additional schemes will be undertaken. Furthermore, in the towns where the schemes at present are inadequate, extensions will be made where such are considered justifiable. Every effort will be made to improve the position of residents in country towns so far as the supply of water to them is concerned. During the winter of this year and the winter of last year we had considerable rain in almost all parts of the State. The fact that we have had two very wet winters is apt to make us forget the experience that some parts of the State had some two or three years ago. If members will take their minds back to the winter of 1944, I think, they will recall that very little rain fell in some parts of the State, especially in what are known as the Lakes areas, Kondinin, Kulin and Lake Graec. In the summer following that winter the Government was under the necessity of providing a great deal of assistance to farmers to enable water to be supplied to them for domestic and stock purposes. The Department of the Army co-operated magnificently at the time in providing motor-trucks and drivers to enable the water to be transported from the various railway sidings, at which it was landed by trains, to the individual properties of the farmers in need of the water.

The department has continued to try to locate supplies of suitable water in those particular areas. Suitable boring plants have been manufactured by the State Engineering Works at North Fremantle. Those plants have been made available under lease to local authorities who, in turn, I understand have hired them out to individual farmers, with the result that a considerable number of bores have been put down. The degree of success achieved has, I consider, been satisfactory. Naturally, there have been many failures. In some places no water at all has been struck. In other places the water struck has been too salt even for stock; but a considerable number of successful bores have been sunk and consequently the position has been made much safer in those areas than was the case previously.

Additional boring plants will be manufactured at the State Engineering Works from time to time, and will be made available to local governing authorities as they find farmers in their localities requiring them.

In the metropolitan area, the work of the Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Department has been speeded up considerably during the last year. I think that every member will recollect that the Government developed post-war works plans long before the war ended, the idea being that those plans would be available for putting into operation whenever the opportunity occurred to operate them and that they would be put into operation to the fullest extent possible with the finances and the materials and the labour available. The building of new homes by the Workers' Homes Board has necessitated extensions of water supply reticulation and extensions to the sewerage system, and these have been undertaken to the fullest extent possible with the labour and materials available. Furthermore, the department has undertaken the installation of sewerage facilities in districts which have not been served up to the beginning of the war.

One of the districts in which a commencement will be made in the near future in the provision of sewerage facilities is the district of Midland Junction. I think this is a district which should have been served very many years ago. It was not served because, when the position was looked at on several occasions before the war, the financial return likely to be received from the sewerage of Midland Junction was not as good as that likely to be received from more thickly settled new districts in the metropolitan area. However, it seemed to me, and to the Treasurer, that if that procedure were to be followed now and in the future, Midland Junction might never be sewered; and it was considered most unjust to a very old district in the metropolitan area, to weigh against its claim the claims of newer districts, and decide in favour of the newer districts merely because they were more thickly settled and because the financial return from them would be better than that from Midland Junction. As a result of the different type of consideration accorded to the claims of Midland Junction on this occasion, approval has been given for the sewerage of what is known as the No. 1 area in that district.

The district of Bassendean is also to be seweraged and some work has already been done in that regard. Other districts will in turn receive attention and the department will push forward as fast as possible in seeing that the sewerage facilities are made available in the metropolitan area. I think it is one of the greatest aids to the improvement of the health of the community and of the preservation of the health of the community in thickly populated areas that deep sewerage and deep drainage facilities should be made available. The last two winters have naturally brought to the department many requests for drainage systems in the metropolitan area.

Metropolitan members of some districts at any rate will know that during each of the last two winters severe floodings have occurred in the metropolitan area. These severe floodings took place particularly in portions of the Belmont district where some of the settlers have been put into such a position as to make it impossible for them to carry on their operations. They have been in that position for a period of several months, so it will be realised that their situation is extremely serious. They naturally look upon the Government as the authority which ought to do something very quickly to see that some drainage system is installed to make it impossible for such floodings to occur in the future. There is one school of thought which suggests that the rain of the last two winters has been extraordinary and that we might not experience winters like them again for another 30 to 40 years. But no-one can be sure about that, and therefore it is necessary to give very close consideration to the flooding problems which have occurred this winter and last winter, and see whether schemes can be devised and put into operation to safeguard the settlers concerned against similar losses and difficulties in the future.

A great deal of consideration has been given during the last 12 months or so to the question of improving the harbours and harbour facilities at Bunbury and Albany in particular and, to some extent, in regard to other harbours away from the metropolitan area. The development of plans in connection with Albany and Bunbury has not been an easy matter, but the engineers concerned have given a great deal of attention to problems in regard to both places; and the Government hopes to be in a position in the

reasonably near future to make public declarations of policy in regard to both of those ports. I think that when the Public Works Estimates were introduced last year the State Shipyard was still working, but that it was moving quickly to a position where it was likely to have to cease operations.

As members will recollect, the State Shipyard was established by the Commonwealth for the purpose of building 300-ton wooden ships for the Department of the Army with the idea that the ships would be used in the islands north of Australia. Several of such ships were built, but soon after the war with Japan finished, the Department of the Army cancelled the balance of the contract it had for the building of ships at the yard. This activity did actually cease for a time, but subsequently the Commonwealth Government placed orders at the yard for the completion of two uncompleted hulls and this order, I understand, was placed by the Commonwealth Government on behalf of U.N.R.R.A. One of the hulls has since been completed and work is going forward in regard to the completion of the second hull. Naturally the revival of activity at the shipyard was welcomed by all concerned, and it has provided and is still providing a considerable amount of employment for men who are skilled and who became skilled in that class of work during the war. When the order for U.N.R.R.A. has been completed the future of the yard will be uncertain, but we are hopeful that orders may come from some other source; or it might be that additional orders will come from U.N.R.R.A.

The day-labour house-building organisation department has continued to operate and I think it can be said quite fairly that its operations have been satisfactory. It has been up against all the difficulties that private builders and contractors have been up against especially in regard to a continual supply of the requisite building materials. I think it was the member for West Perth who, this afternoon when discussing another matter, pointed out the difficulties that builders and contractors are up against in framing their estimates because of the uncertainty of a consistent and full flow of building materials. This is an extreme difficulty and we in the Public Works Department probably have a fuller knowledge of it because our day-labour building organisation has been up

against it. However, the position has improved slowly but surely and, with the winter gone, I think we shall find that all classes of materials will come forward in greater supply, thus overcoming many of the difficulties with which those associated with the building of houses have had to contend during the last year or two.

The department's house-building organisation has built brick houses and timber houses. Its costs of building have compared reasonably well with those of private builders and contractors. Questions were asked in the House some weeks ago as to the actual costs of our organisation, and replies were given. Those sufficiently interested to compare the costs of our department, through its day-labour organisation, with those of private builders and contractors, would be satisfied that the comparison was favourable. However, we hope to do still better. We feel that with the good weather now available and likely to be with us for six months or so, and with supplies of building materials coming forward more regularly and fully, our organisation will be able to do even better. I would like to pay a tribute to the manager of the scheme, Mr. David Gough, and to all those associated with him, including the building tradesmen and the labourers who have been working on the houses. Most of the tradesmen and labourers are returned Servicemen, and they have entered into the work in the right spirit and with the full realisation that houses are urgently needed by the people. As a result, they have given of their best in an endeavour to see that as many houses as possible are built and occupied in the shortest practicable time under existing circumstances.

The department has carried on a vigorous policy of repairing, renovating and general maintenance of public buildings, particularly schools and hospitals. That policy has been speeded up as it has become possible to do so. Some schools have had additions made to them, and in odd districts new ones have been built. Some hospitals have been added to and, generally, in view of the shortage of building materials and building tradesmen the work of the Public Works Department, through its Architectural Branch, in the repairing, renovating and maintenance of schools and hospitals, has been excellent. That work will be increased as time goes on and the

department becomes physically capable of doing more than has been possible up to date.

Mr. Watts: When will the new architectural building be finished?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is finished.

Mr. Watts: Is it occupied?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, it has been occupied for five or six weeks. The provision of that new building and the up-to-date facilities in it have greatly increased the efficiency of the staff and have enabled them to do much more work and, I should say, better work than was possible in the dreadful accommodation they previously had.

The Traffic Department has struggled with its many problems. The only phase of its activities that I wish to refer to has to do with the Safety Week which was organised and carried through recently. I express the appreciation of the department to those responsible for the organising and carrying out of the Safety Week programme. It is universally recognised and admitted that that effort was valuable, and it received a splendid response from motorists and pedestrians alike. I quite admit that a special week's effort in regard to safety is not enough. It would be foolish for anyone to think that because there had been a good response during Safety Week everything is now all right so far as safety on the roads is concerned. All those associated with Safety Week will continue their efforts to improve the measure of safety upon the roads for motorists and pedestrians. Provided there is maintained the commonsense, care and co-operation which were so obvious during Safety Week, we can look forward to much happier results than we have had in this State for many years. The personnel of the Traffic Branch of the Police Department is being increased and will continue to be increased as the services of suitable men become available. As it is increased, so will the regulations under the Traffic Act be more strictly and widely enforced, and consequently there should be a continual improvement in the safety factor of our roads.

The relationship of the local government section of the Public Works Department with local governing authorities through-

out the State, has, almost without exception, been happy. There was, perhaps, one unhappy incident during the year when the department refused the request of the Bunbury Municipal Council to transfer to it a portion of the Bunbury Road Board. Apart from that, I do not think there was one unhappy spot. Therefore, there has been a great measure of help given by the local government section of the department to the road boards and municipalities throughout the State. I have not spoken of the work done by the department in the North-West in regard to water supplies, harbour facilities, refrigeration and so on, because those are matters to which the Minister for the North-West will be able to address himself when placing the Estimates of his department before the Committee.

The Main Roads Department has been able to increase its work during the last year, but it has certainly not been possible to meet all the requests for financial assistance made to it by road boards and municipalities. It is remarkable that so many requests have been put to the department by local authorities. There seems to be an idea abroad that the Main Roads Department is in a position to enable all the local governing authorities in the State to finance the carrying out of the belated road maintenance and construction programmes that almost all road boards and municipalities have to undertake owing to the accumulation of wartime arrears. It must be remembered that the Main Roads Department has a huge accumulation of wartime arrears to make good on its own main roads. During the war it was not possible for the department to maintain its main roads in anything like reasonable condition.

Mr. McLarty: They stood up remarkably well.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: One has only to travel over any main road today to realise that the department will have to expend a huge sum of money during the next two or three years in order to save its main roads, and restore them to the splendid condition in which most of them were before the outbreak of war. I agree with the member for Murray-Wellington, who says that the main roads stood up remarkably well during the war, in view of the fact that very little maintenance could be carried out on them. It is a great tribute to

the skill and work that went into their construction in the first place.

When I said that the Main Roads Department could not meet all the requests made to it from time to time by local authorities I did not wish to give the impression that local authorities would be wasting their time in putting forward any requests at all. The department is anxious to assist financially any local governing authority that can put up a good case as to any particular road. During the last two winters, owing to excessive rainfall and flood conditions, in many country areas the local authorities have had placed on them a financial burden that they could not possibly shoulder. In many instances the department has already agreed to make financial assistance available so as to enable local authorities to repair the damage done. Where a local authority is able to put up a good case to the department for financial assistance, the department is anxious to help. That is not an open invitation to members to stir their local governing authorities up and get them to rush to the department for grants of thousands of pounds. It is a suggestion that every member of the Committee should ask his road board or municipality whether there is any possibility of a solid case being put up for assistance.

The Department of Industrial Development has continued to operate vigorously, and to some extent successfully, I hope, in the field of secondary industry in this State. Work on the production of potash at Chandler has continued and some progress has been made in the effort to increase the quality of the product. That problem is an extremely important one. Considerable technical skill and knowledge have been concentrated on it, and there is reasonably good ground for believing that the required improvement in the product will be achieved. To the extent to which we can achieve that result the industry will be more safely founded, and it will be possible to operate the industry more successfully from a financial standpoint. The establishment and carrying on of this industry have been costly. The Treasurer has had many a headache over the provision of finance for the industry and for its proposed further development, but so far the Government has maintained its faith in the ultimate capacity of those responsible to establish it on a successful basis, both

as to the production of good quality potash for use in Australia and its production successfully on a sound financial basis.

Mr. Thorn: You want a uniform test, also.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. There are some critics—particularly one in the Legislative Council—who lose no opportunity of condemning this industry. The gentleman to whom I refer has a particular set on it. Probably his opposition is based much more on his political opposition to the Government than on any merit that the industry might or might not possess. Consequently he is always indulging in calamity—howling against the industry, which is undesirable and unwarranted. I feel sure that in the long run the industry will prove itself.

Mr. Watts: You have not yet convinced yourself of that?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Not absolutely! A great deal depends on the success achieved in the effort now being made to improve the quality of the product. If it can be improved sufficiently complete success, both financially and otherwise, will have been won. If the quality of the product cannot be improved to the required extent the industry may not pay its way entirely, although production of adequate supplies of potash will be available at all times. Even if the industry does not pay for itself in the direct sense, there are indirect benefits that would make it worthwhile for any Government to continue its operation, more especially as potash is not produced anywhere else in Australia. The Commonwealth Government is at present paying a subsidy of about £6 per ton on imported potash and there might be a possibility of the State being reimbursed for some of its present losses until the time when the quality of the product has been so far improved as to make production at Chandler, without a subsidy, financially sound. On many occasions when debates have taken place on the losses suffered by the State in land settlement schemes, the argument has been put forward that, whilst there may have been direct financial losses, there have been indirect financial gains and that, on a balance, the indirect financial gains have more than outweighed the direct financial losses.

Mr. Thorn: It is a very sound argument.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If it is a sound argument to be applied to the development of primary industries it may also

be sound when applied to the development of secondary industries, especially in a State such as Western Australia where it is difficult, against Eastern States competition, to establish and maintain such industries in operation.

Mr. Thorn: Potash must have a value to industry.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not wish to develop that argument at this stage in regard to secondary industries, but it is a point that ought to be borne in mind by those who would criticise this industry on the ground that it does not pay completely.

The charcoal-iron and wood-distillation industries at Wundowie are being established. With the ending of the war, the work of those responsible for obtaining plant and equipment, etc., has become much easier. During the last six or nine months, progress at Wundowie has been accelerated, and I intend later in the year to try to give as many members of Parliament as possible an opportunity to go to Wundowie to inspect the work that has been done there. I believe it would be an eye-opener to most members and that everyone would get a thrill from being able to inspect the work. The plant is an extremely valuable one, and it would be highly informative to the members who undertake the trip to see what has been established.

I read somewhere—I think it was in one of the "Hansards" of the current session—a somewhat severe condemnation of Wundowie by a member of another place. He condemned the project on the ground that no production had yet been achieved. The answer to his statement is that no production was ever planned for the year 1946.

Mr. Thorn: We have not heard that from the member for the district yet.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, I think he is very solidly supporting the Government in its effort to establish this important industry. The plant at Wundowie is expected to go into production in March of next year. The plant will produce the products of wood distillation, and the timber that remains after the valuable products within the timber have been extracted will be turned into charcoal. The charcoal will be used as a fuel for the smelting of iron-ore, and pig-iron will be produced as a result of the various operations through which the iron will pass. The industry has been

located at Wundowie because most of the raw materials are available there or very near thereto.

This industry is being established as a semi-commercial plant; I think it could really be called a small commercial plant. The idea is to test out the economics of the system at Wundowie. If, after making a thorough test, the Government is convinced that this industry can be established permanently and upon a large-scale basis, it is probable that a large scale wood-distillation and charcoal-iron industry will be located in the South-West. We would hope in that regard to be able to establish in the South-West what is known as a fully integrated steel industry. We have been told by one or two croakers that we could never hope to succeed in this field in competition with the B.H.P. Coy. We gave the B.H.P. every opportunity and encouragement to come to Western Australia and establish a branch industry of its own, but it did not regard Western Australia as being of sufficient importance from its point of view. We were told that the local market was too small to justify serious consideration by the company, and that it was financially and economically impossible for the company to establish a branch industry here. The B.H.P., however, is quite willing to take our iron ore from Cockatoo Island, ship it to Newcastle and process it there. We feel that it is our duty, by safeguarding the interests of the people of Western Australia and trying to establish industries for future generations, to make a very serious effort in the field of establishing an iron and steel industry in this State.

Mr. Watts: If you can produce it as good in quality and at a competitive price, everyone will agree.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I believe that in actual practice it will be proved that we can manufacture in Western Australia a higher quality of iron than the B.H.P. can produce at Newcastle because of the fact that we shall be using the charcoal smelting process whereas the coke smelting process is being used at Newcastle. It is a universally accepted fact that iron smelted by the use of charcoal is superior in quality to iron produced with coking coal as a smelting agent. Charcoal-iron the world over carries a premium in price at least £1 per ton above iron produced where coking coal is the smelting agent. Consequently, in the matter of quality we feel that our product will be superior to

that of the B.H.P. Coy., and we hope that we shall be able to compete with that company in price.

By linking the wood-distillation industry with the charcoal-iron industry, we spread our costs in such a way as should enable us to produce a better quality article for at least an equal price if not a lower price. However, that is something yet to be proved. I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition and indeed every member will be extremely pleased if, in actual practice, these hopes and prophecies, if members care so to regard them, are fulfilled.

Mr. Watts: It is your turnover that is worrying me. I do not see how you are going to dispose of your production.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I suggest that there will be no shortage of demand for charcoal-iron. We have already received sufficient inquiries from this State and from eastern Australia to dispose of double the quantity we shall be able to produce each year at Wundowie.

Mr. Watts: But the Wundowie plant is only in the nature of a pilot plant or a semi-commercial plant.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We shall produce at Wundowie 10,000 tons a year. If we can carry on with that for five, six or 10 years, the demand in Australia will be increasing and we may be able to establish markets overseas for charcoal-iron. If we can do that, and if the Government, after a careful investigation of the whole scheme, is satisfied that it would be justified in establishing a large scale industry in the South-West to produce say 100,000 tons a year, the Government would ask Parliament for authority to proceed with the scheme.

The newspapers have already announced that the State Government has succeeded in making arrangements with the Commonwealth for the State to take over the munitions factory at Welshpool. This factory has been taken over under a lease, with the result that the State Government will be in control of the land and buildings at Welshpool and will be able to lease them to the owners and operators of a number of secondary industries. This is a tremendously valuable asset for the State Government to control. If those buildings were not available, it would be impossible, owing to the present scarcity of materials, to provide for the expansion that is taking place in a num-

ber of secondary industries in this State. Naturally, it is exceedingly difficult for the owner of a factory to obtain a building permit to extend his factory or to build a new factory, or for any new firm coming to the State to obtain a permit for sufficient building materials to erect a new factory. Fortunately, we have all of these buildings at Welshpool, which are now under our control. We have allocated all of the buildings available there to existing secondary industries, which are being transferred from other districts to Welshpool; but I should say we have reserved some of the space for the new industries which we are hoping to establish in the reasonably near future.

In that regard, members will have read in the newspaper some time ago of the efforts of the State Government to reach a position when there could be established in this State a tremendously important industry for the manufacture of a certain class of machine required in the agricultural industries. Those negotiations are still proceeding. I was always led to believe by those who sometimes sit in opposition to Governments and by the general public that all the red tape is to be found in Government departments and that none of it is to be found in the field of private enterprise.

Mr. Leslie: Most of it is in the Government departments.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have found, and the Government has also found, that a considerable quantity of red tape also prevails in the field of private business, particularly in regard to the negotiations I have mentioned. It has been necessary for one of the private firms concerned to conduct negotiations with London, and the branch of the firm in Australia was not able to proceed—much as it would like to—until it secured the approval of its London directors.

Mr. Watts: They have had so much control by Government departments that they are getting into bad habits now.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I understand that this red-tape procedure has prevailed, as far as this particular institution is concerned, ever since it was established in Australia, and that goes back for the last 60 or 70 years.

Mr. Watts: That is the exception that proves the rule.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: So that institution has nothing to learn from the Government; it may very well be that the Government has something to learn from it. However, we are still confident that this proposed industry will be established here and that it will be located at Welshpool. If it is, it will prove to be of tremendous advantage both from the point of view of providing employment for tradesmen and semi-skilled workers, and for providing farmers with a machine for which they are desperately in need at present and will be for many years to come. The change-over of industry from war to peace has gone on apace. Most of the private engineering shops in this State have settled down on a solid peace-time basis and are proceeding to supply the many orders they are receiving. Generally, in the field of secondary industry there has been during the last year substantial and gratifying progress. Employment figures in secondary industry during the past year have reached an all-time "high," which I am sure is something that will be extremely satisfying to all members of Parliament and I hope to every member of the community.

The only other item I shall refer to deals with experiments being financed by the Government in connection with Collie coal, and it is probable that the Minister for Mines will have much more to say upon this subject than I will. The Government, through Mr. F. C. Fox, who I think by this time is well known to most of the people in this State, has been carrying out vital experiments with Collie coal. The main experiments have had to do with the possibility of gasifying Collie coal for industrial and domestic purposes, and also coking Collie coal, so that we might no longer be dependent upon the importation of coke from eastern Australia for industrial purposes. It can be said with every degree of confidence that the first experiment, gasifying Collie coal for industrial and domestic purposes, will succeed, although there still remains the question of the cost of reticulating domestic gas when it is finally proved that it can be produced from Collie coal. The question of reticulation and distribution of gas can be almost as important as the question of producing the gas from the coal.

Mr. Watts: Probably more important.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is solid ground for believing that the experiments regarding the coking of Collie coal will also succeed. If they do, Western Australia will have taken a very great step along the road of industrial progress, because if Collie coal can be coked and sold at a reasonable price, then our industrial establishments will be greatly benefited and their security will be made so much greater than is the case while they have to depend upon the non-dependable source of supply in New South Wales. I pay a very high tribute to the work of Mr. Fox in this field. He came here some three or four years ago and was practically unknown in this State. He had a hard battle to fight in the early stages, because all the established opinion here for many years was against his idea, the widely-held belief being that gas could not be produced from Collie coal and that certainly Collie coal could not be coked. The Government was convinced by the ideas which Mr. Fox put before it and by the case which he was able to build up from time to time, and therefore decided that the information he had given us, he being an engineer of high standing, was of sufficient importance to warrant our risking a few thousand pounds for experimental purposes. We therefore backed him financially and have had no cause to regret our action up to date. As I said a few moments ago, we have very good ground for believing that the experiments he has been conducting and upon which he is still engaged will prove to be completely successful.

Mr. Triat: Hear, hear!

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.9 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 2nd October, 1946.

	PAGE
Questions: Legislative Council, as to estimated cost of referendum	1047
Mine Workers' Relief Fund, as to benefits paid to pensioners	1047
Bills: Municipal Corporations Act Amendment, 3A., passed	1048
Totalisator Duty Act Amendment, 1A.	1050
Friendly Societies Act Amendment, returned	1050
Nurses Registration Act Amendment, 2A., Com. report	1051
Marketing of Barley (No. 2), 2A., Com.	1057
State Government Insurance Office Act Amendment, 2A.	1069

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

QUESTIONS.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

As to Estimated Cost of Referendum.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER asked the Chief Secretary:

- 1, Has the Government obtained an estimate of the cost of the proposed referendum concerning the Legislative Council?
- 2, If not, why not?
- 3, If it has, what is the estimated cost and how is the estimate arrived at?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

- 1, No.
- 2, Because the cost can be estimated on the expenditure incurred at a general election or the Local Option Poll held in April, 1921.
- 3, See answer to No. 2.

MINE WORKERS' RELIEF FUND.

As to Benefits Paid to Pensioners.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS asked the Chief Secretary: Considering the fact that under the present Commonwealth scheme pensioners may, in addition to their pension, receive up to £1 per week as against 12s. 6d. per week previously,

- 1, What is the position of the beneficiaries under the Mine Workers' Relief Fund who, at present, receive 12s. 6d. (or less) per week above the 32s. 6d. per week Commonwealth pension?