

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday 21st August, 1947.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.

WATER SUPPLIES.

As to Charges to Goldfields Household.

Mr. STYANTS (on notice) asked the Minister for Water Supply:

Owing to the improved financial position of the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme, will he give consideration to the following:—

(1) Abolish water meter rents, thus bringing Goldfields consumers into line in this regard with those in the metropolitan area?

(2) Reduce the price of water to householders (not business premises or mining companies) to a flat rate of 2s. 6d. per thousand gallons?

(3) What would be the cost per annum to implement the above proposals, respectively?

The MINISTER replied:

The hon. member assumes the financial position of the Goldfields Water Supply accounts to have improved. On the contrary, the figures for the three years (quoted hereunder) show the annual losses to be increasing—

1943-44	..	..	..	£60,555
1944-45	..	..	..	£77,916
1945-46	..	..	..	£87,702

(1) and (2) The Government is already giving consideration to the joint questions

of abolition of meter rents and reduction in price of water on the Goldfields.

(3) The loss per annum if meter rents under the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme are abolished will amount to approximately £2,774. It is impossible to state what will be the cost to the State in the event of a reduction in the price of water to householders on the Goldfields to a flat rate of 2s. 6d. per thousand gallons, because it is not known how many householders will qualify for rebate by prompt payment of rates, but the approximate loss would be something in the vicinity of £3,000.

T.B. EXAMINATIONS.

(a) *As to Number and Results.*

Mr. NEEDHAM (on notice) asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health:

(1) What progress is being made with the x-ray anti-T.B. examination?

(2) How many people have been x-rayed—(a) males; (b) females?

(3) With what results?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied:

(1) Clinics have been opened at the following hospitals:—Perth, Fremantle, Children's, Kalgoorlie, Northam, Collie and Bunbury. In Perth, Cathedral Hall has been purchased and reconstruction and adaptation are proceeding. Tenders have been called and close tomorrow for suitable x-ray plant. Additional staff has been appointed and others are being sought.

(2) and (3) Information desired is not available.

(b) *As to Infected Dairy Cows Destroyed.*

Mr. NIMMO (on notice) asked the Minister for Agriculture:

With respect to safeguarding the health of children, can he supply the figures showing the number of T.B. infected dairy cows destroyed in the metropolitan area during 1933-1947 under Labour Governments, and during the first four and a half months of the present Government?

The MINISTER replied:

From January, 1936, to December, 1946, 1,388 cattle were slaughtered under the provisions of the Dairy Cattle Compensation Act. Under the provisions of the Milk Act, since the scheme commenced in July, 1936

cattle have been slaughtered and 259 cattle are awaiting slaughter.

EDUCATION.

As to Candidates for Scholarship Examination.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN (on notice) asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Will any child of the required age, whose intention to be a candidate for this year's scholarship examination has been made known to the Education Department within the proper time, be permitted to sit for the examination despite failure to pass the preliminary test which has been given?

(2) If not, under what power can such children be excluded from taking the scholarship examination?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The institution of a preliminary test was, I am informed, decided upon at the beginning of this year consequent upon the very large number of entrants last year who failed to measure up to the standard required and the great amount of work involved in consequence in examining papers of candidates who clearly had no prospects of success. The preliminary test was conducted on a fifth standard basis so that no hardship would be caused. Any child who missed the preliminary test through illness or inadvertence of any teacher was not excluded.

(2) It was considered that power existed in the regulations as no restrictions were therein as to the actual time and conduct of the examination, but I have asked that an amendment of the regulation be prepared to clarify the matter so that it can be tabled after preparation and gazettal.

TRAMCAR BARN.

As to Investigation for Decentralisation.

Mr. GRAHAM (on notice) asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Was the Commissioner of Railways or the manager of the Tramways consulted regarding the appointment of the Town Planning Commissioner to investigate the decentralisation of tramcar barns?

(2) If so, what were their views?

(3) If not, on whose recommendation was the appointment made?

(4) For what reasons was a person outside the Tramways administration appointed to the position?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) to (4) Recognising that the amenities provided for Tramway employees at the car barn at East Perth are lamentable, and must be rebuilt at the earliest possible date; that further car and trolley bus accommodation must be provided as soon as possible; and that the rapid expansion of these services, and their effective handling will require more than one car barn, the Government decided to obtain a report as to the location for additional car barns before proceeding with any building programme.

As the Town Planning Commissioner has close knowledge of the history leading up to the establishment of car barns in the Eastern States capitals, and as town planning arrangements are intimately involved with their location, the Government decided to instruct the Town Planning Commissioner to proceed East and on his return to submit a report to the Government.

MILK.

As to Treatment Licensees, Depots, Etc.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN (on notice) asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) How many treatment licenses issued by the Milk Board in the exercise of its powers under the Milk Act are at present current?

(2) Have any persons or firms in possession of a treatment license, a financial interest in more than one treatment depot?

(3) Does he know of any firm in possession of a treatment license that is endeavouring to acquire other depots for which treatment licenses have been granted?

(4) How does he reconcile his answer to part (3) of my question of the 19th August, wherein he stated that the consolidation of treatment depots was in the interests of the people insofar as the supply of clean milk is concerned, with his answer on the 7th August, in which he stated that the consolidation of treatment depots was not a scheme, or part of a scheme, for the improvement of the supply, delivery, or distribution of milk for consumers?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Twenty treatment licenses were issued under the Milk Act for the year ended the 30th June, 1947. One further treatment

license was approved by the board but the issue was deferred at the request of the applicant. These licenses were issued on the understanding that the granting of any subsequent treatment license was contingent upon the holder complying with a standard to be set. Such standard has now been set by the board and was announced in "The West Australian" on the 14th August. Applications for treatment licenses for the current year are under consideration by the board.

(2) Yes.

(3) Yes.

(4) I consider that the hon. member's questions implied that the action of the Board was implemented under Section 62 of the Act, whereas it had the necessary power under Section 26 of the Act to take the action it did.

WHEAT.

As to Bulk Bin at Ravensthorpe.

Mr. NALDER (on notice) asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Will the bulk wheat bin at Ravensthorpe be completed in time for the coming harvest?

(2) What will be the capacity?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Between thirty and forty thousand bushels.

COLLIE COAL.

As to Price Allowance for Development Work.

Mr. MAY (on notice) asked the Minister representing the Minister for Mines:

Is there any allowance made on the price of coal for development work? And if so, is the total amount allowed spent fully on development work in the coal mines?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(a) In the case of Amalgamated Collieries, the price paid by the Government covers expenditure actually incurred on development.

(b) The Griffin Company's prices are fixed by the Commonwealth Coal Commissioner and no information is available regarding their make-up.

DONNYBROOK STONE.

As to Use for Local House-Building.

Mr. REYNOLDS (on notice) asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Does the Government intend working the State quarries at Donnybrook?

(2) Are they at present leased?

(3) If so, to whom and on what terms?

(4) What is the Housing Commission's attitude towards using the stone for houses in Donnybrook if it could be supplied in sizes suitable for handling by stonemasons or bricklayers?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The Government has no immediate proposals for taking over from the present lessees, and working the State Quarries.

(2) There is only one good quarry—namely, the one leased.

(3) The lessees are A. T. Brine and Son, who hold a yearly tenancy terminable by six months' notice. Minimum yearly royalty £13. Royalty rate 9d. per ton. The lease was granted in 1941.

(4) The Housing Commission's attitude towards the using of stone for houses is that the cost of preparation of stone in suitable sizes would be prohibitive and is therefore not recommended.

KALGOORLIE HOSPITAL.

As to Intermediate Ward and Trainees.

Mr. STYANTS (on notice) asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health:

(1) What are the prospects of getting sufficient trained staff to allow of the re-opening of the intermediate ward at the Kalgoorlie Hospital in the near future?

(2) How many "schools" for trainee-nurses have been held at the Kalgoorlie Hospital since the tutorial classes were recommenced some months ago?

(3) How many trainees were in each "school"?

(4) How many of these trainees in each "school" were local residents?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied:

(1) Not good in the immediate future.

(2) Two.

(3) No. 1, 9; No. 2, 10.

(4) No. 1—7 from Kalgoorlie; 2 from elsewhere. No. 2—2 from Kalgoorlie; 8 from elsewhere. A third school will commence shortly with 12 trainees, all from elsewhere.

SERVICEMEN'S LAND SETTLEMENT.*As to Properties Offered, Purchased, Etc.*

Mr. LESLIE (on notice) asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) How many farming properties have been offered to the Government for purchase by the Government for the War Service Land Settlement Scheme?

(2) How many of the properties offered have been—

(a) recommended by the Land Purchase Board for purchase;

(b) rejected by the board;

(c) are still under consideration by the board;

(d) have been actually purchased?

(3) Have all of the properties recommended by the Land Purchase Board been submitted to the Commonwealth for approval? If not, how many?

(4) Of the number so submitted, how many have been—

(a) approved by the Commonwealth?

(b) rejected by the Commonwealth

(c) are still under consideration?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 1,515.

(2) (a) 242.

(b) 405.

(c) 172.

(d) 111.

(3) Yes. 218 submitted; 24 in course of preparation.

(4) (a) 111.

(b) 33.

(c) 64.

In addition to which, 10 were withdrawn after submission, making a total of 218.

NATIVE ADMINISTRATION.*(a) As to Loan Funds for Expenditure.*

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY (on notice) asked the Minister for Native Affairs:

What was the total amount of loan money approved and held in the loan account for expenditure on native affairs at the 31st March, 1947?

The CHIEF SECRETARY (for the Minister for Native Affairs) replied:

£14,222 17s. 3d.

(b) As to Sisal Hemp Production at Settlements.

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY (on notice) asked the Minister for Native Affairs:

(1) What acreage of sisal hemp is under cultivation at Udilla Native Settlement?

(2) What acreage of sisal hemp is under cultivation at Moore River Settlement and what results are being achieved at both settlements?

The CHIEF SECRETARY (for the Minister for Native Affairs) replied:

(1) Approximately three acres.

(2) (a) None. An experimental plot of one acre has been selected and it is anticipated that this will be planted within the next few weeks.

(b) The experimental plot at Udilla Native Settlement has not been in existence for sufficient time to enable any definite results to be obtained.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Eighth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [2.28]: May I, with other members, congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, upon your elevation to the highest position that this Assembly has to offer. I feel certain that at your hands every member will receive the treatment he merits and that, to the extent of established precedent and custom demanded by this House, you will be strictly impartial in your dealings with all members. I have also to congratulate the member for York upon his appointment to the onerous position of Chairman of Committees, and I am sure that with his all-round ability, he will fill that office with great credit.

At the outset of my remarks, I wish to express my deep regret at the untimely death of the former member for Sussex, Mr. Willmott. With the new member for that electorate, I should like to endorse the sentiment that we very much regret the circumstances which made his presence possible in this House, although, of course, we are quite pleased to see the new member amongst us. During the time we were travelling through the country last year and the year before with two Royal Commissions, of which Mr. Willmott and I were

members, I got to know him particularly well and to recognise his sterling qualities. It can be said honestly, sincerely and truthfully of the late member that he never willingly, by word or deed, injured man, woman or child. He was what I would call one of Nature's gentlemen. He had a wonderful philosophy, which could be summed up in a few words. He believed that if one could not speak well of a person, one should not speak of him at all. Nature had not been very kind to him as far as his health was concerned, and the only redeeming feature about it was that his fatal illness did not last a great length of time and he did not have much physical suffering. His sunny personality, his keen wit and humour, will be missed by all members of this Chamber.

I listened carefully, sometimes with a certain amount of amusement to the recriminations in this Chamber about election propaganda. I heard charges and counter-charges made with respect to it, but I am one of those who believe that at election time some privilege and latitude should be extended to the members of all Parties. I may perhaps go to the extent of saying that a certain amount of exaggeration should be permitted. It is the one time in three years when a member has an opportunity, to use a colloquialism, to blow his own trumpet. If he does not do so, the people in the community who do not take sufficient interest in the public life of the State and in the performance of their members will not be able to assess the value of their work during their term of office. As far as I can see, with one or two exceptions there was nothing much to cavil about in the election propaganda.

One pamphlet, however, I think went to the extent of misrepresentation. That is something which should not be permitted at election time. The pamphlet stated that the previous Government had not provided any transport, any hospitals or schools. That type of statement in my opinion comes under the category of distortion and exaggeration. But most people think for themselves and would assess such distortion and exaggeration at their face value. What I do think was deliberate misrepresentation was a pamphlet telling the people that the Labour Government was going to increase freights and fares and the cost of

tobacco, cigarettes, clothing and other commodities. An anticipation of that kind is sheer misrepresentation, because never at any time did the previous Government indicate that it intended to raise either road freights or rail freights; neither did it have any control over the raising of the prices of the other commodities. The statement was all-embracing; the Government was going to get the housewife in, the smoker in, the traveller that used our transport, both road and rail. It was a vote-catching device and distinctly unfair, because it was about something that had not taken place and something else that was only anticipated.

I was a little alarmed when the Attorney General, a man to whom I am indebted for much advice, both of a legal and Parliamentary nature, said by way of interjection one night that he would dig up some of the stuff we put up. A short time afterwards he left his seat. Anticipating that he had gone to search his dossier—and I know he has a very extensive one, as I have on various occasions participated in the knowledge stored there—I felt some trepidation when he returned to the Chamber. I understand, however, on very good authority, that despite his search and an appeal which he made to the war office of his Party the next day, the secretary was not able to dig up anything more incriminating against the election propaganda of the State Labour Party than something which happened last year, the photographing of what was alleged to be a speaker's notes in the Federal election, something over which the State Government had no control whatever. The Attorney General designated this as a forgery. There is a law against forgery in this country and I cannot imagine the Liberal Party missing an opportunity to prosecute those who were responsible for making that document public, if in actual fact it were a forgery. I did not see the document, but I am very pleased that after such an exhaustive search the most incriminating thing that could be charged against the State Labour Party was something with which it had nothing to do and which harked back to the Federal election of last year.

The member for York disposed of the election propaganda by a general accusation that the Labour Party was the worst offender of the two, but he did not give any details. It is quite simple to lay a gen-

eral charge, but that does not carry the same weight as a specific charge, because the latter would give members an opportunity to know exactly what is being referred to. The way in which the member for Irwin-Moore disposed of the matter was simplicity in itself. He said in effect that in all sports a code of rules was laid down to govern the sport, and if you had an opponent and happened to foul him and also to break every rule governing the sport, and a protest is made to the judge afterwards, the way to overcome the difficulty is to question his good sportsmanship. I do not think that carries much weight either. I frequently read in the Press about protests which have been made against the conduct of contestants in various sports and there has been no question of the sportsmanship of the person who made the protest. In most instances the protests were well grounded and justified by the attitude and the conduct of the opponent. Very definite and elaborate promises have been made by the Government to the people of the State. I feel sure the members of the Government will not be so thin-skinned as to get annoyed or take umbrage if the members of the Opposition draw their attention to the fact that they have not fulfilled those promises.

I did not intend to touch on the question of the 40-hour week but for the fact that other members introduced the subject. In my opinion, this case is sub judice. It is being considered on its merits by the courts of this country, and I understand that when a matter is on trial and under consideration it should not be discussed either in the Legislative halls or elsewhere. But as it has been discussed, I propose to say that in my opinion the arguments adduced against it are the stock-in-trade objections that have been raised against the reduction of hours ever since we have had industries in Australia. Members opposite say that the time is not opportune. So far as they are concerned the time has never been opportune. Even when half of our workers were unemployed, when they were living on sustenance and were working only a short period in each week, there was just the same objection to a reduction in the number of hours as is voiced today. I am not anticipating an adverse decision by the Commonwealth Arbitration Court on this matter, but assuming that the decision is adverse, I would

suggest that a reduction of hours will have to be brought about within a very short period.

At present we know that as a result of six years of war, all commodities are in short supply. The demand is much greater than the deliveries. But with the mechanisation of industry, within a very short period of years we will find that so many goods will be produced that the supply will have overtaken the demand and, indeed, that goods will be over supplied to such an extent that either a reduction of hours in the working week will have to be agreed to, in order that all the people may be employed, or the same thing will occur as occurred in the years 1930 to 1939—when 60 per cent. of the people were in employment and 40 per cent. were receiving the dole—because there will be insufficient work for them.

I want to congratulate the new member for Irwin-Moore on his speech. I thought it was an excellent effort. There is no doubt that he has a thorough knowledge of the subjects with which he dealt and he touched upon them in the manner of a veteran. While I do not disagree with what he said, I believe he told only part of the story of the price of wheat. I do not know whether the hon. member knew the other facts of the case and, knowing them, decided for diplomacy's sake not to mention them. If he did, he is one of those advocates who believe that when one says anything one must always be certain that what is said are facts, but not necessarily all the facts. He said that over a certain period—the depression period—when the oversea market was insufficient to provide a reasonable price for wheat, the people of Australia had been levied for a home consumption price that would at least be sufficient to keep farmers on their properties. Then he went on to tell us of the amount that had been withheld—he claimed, unfairly—since the world parity price had risen to such an extent. I am not in a position to deny that.

Let me say that I am not one who begrudges the farmer anything he can get. I was reared on a farm in this State at a time when modern invention had not done away with isolation and hardship on farms to the extent that has been achieved today, and I have a keen appreciation and admiration of those who go into the virgin bush and blaze a home and property out of it for

themselves. I do not begrudge them anything they get; but it must be remembered that as a result of the advent of motor transport, wireless and the telephone, the isolation, hardship and drudgery that existed when I was a boy endeavouring to get a living out of the soil do not now exist. The hon. member did not mention that one of the chief ingredients in raising wheat is super and that the Commonwealth Government is subsidising super to the extent of £3 a ton.

I have taken out some figures concerning super. They were supplied to the Outports Royal Commission by the manager of Cuming Smith. In order that no charge would be made that the war years were not a fair period on which to make an estimate of the amount of super used, I have taken the period from 1930 to 1939, the decade prior to the war. We find that the average that was produced and sent out from the three super works in this State was:—Metropolitan works, 167,000 tons per year; Geraldton, 21,000 tons; and Picton, 36,000 tons; or a total of 224,000 tons from the three works. I found out on making inquiries at the Railway Department today, that those figures would be a pretty fair estimate of the amount of super that is being taken out from the various works now. The department gave me the quantities taken out over the last three years, as follows:—1945: 171,000 tons; 1946: 230,000 tons; and 1947: 196,000 tons. In each case the figures were for the year ended in June. So the two sets of figures are fairly approximate.

If we allow a subsidy of £3 per ton, we find that annually the wheat farmer is getting a bonus of £672,000 in regard to super. Figures taken from the Commonwealth Year Book indicate that the wheat production of Western Australia is approximately one-fifth of that of the Commonwealth. If we multiply £672,000 by five, we find that there is a yearly subsidy on super of £3,360,000. Multiply that by ten years, and we have a subsidy of £33,600,000.

Mr. Ackland: How much did the wheat-grower get?

Mr. STYANTS: The greater part of it.

The Minister for Railways: He does not get any.

Mr. STYANTS: If the wheatgrower does not get it, the kindred industries of wool-growing and cattle-raising do. If the super is not used in wheatgrowing, it is used in pasture growing and the figure quoted still represents benefit gained by farmers of this State.

Hon. N. Keenan: Can you tell us for what years that subsidy was paid?

Mr. STYANTS: I know that it has been paid since the Japanese captured Nauru and it is still in existence.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That was about 1940.

Mr. STYANTS: Yes.

The Minister for Education: The Japanese did not capture Nauru in 1940.

Mr. STYANTS: I want also to deal with the concession freight allowed by the Railway Department on super. That rate is a flat one of 2s. a ton and a farthing a ton per mile in addition. The average works out at .54d. a ton per mile. The average haulage cost to the Railway Department is 1.74d. per ton per mile. So it can be seen, using the figure of .54d. per ton per mile against the average cost of 1.74d., that there is an actual loss of about 1¼d. a ton a mile in the carting of superphosphate. But, bearing in mind that probably the carting of superphosphate would not involve the average cost of 1.74d., because it would be a compact freight, loaded in full truck loads and hauled in full trainloads, I have deducted ¼d. a ton a mile. Taking an average haul of 150 miles, which would be conservative, and a loss of 1d. a ton a mile on superphosphate, we find that the Railway Department has actually been losing 12s. 6d. on that cartage. Therefore, on a total of 224,000 tons for the year, a loss of 12s. 6d. a ton would amount to £140,000 that the Railway Department is actually losing annually on the haulage of superphosphate to the farming and pastoral interests of this State; or, over a ten-year period, an amount of £1,400,000.

I have also looked up the costs of carting superphosphate on the other railway systems of Australia, and I find without exception, that the rate in Western Australia is the lowest. I have again taken an average haul of 150 miles. In Western Australia, it is 5s. 2d. a ton, which is not a profitable rate; there is a considerable loss. On the

Commonwealth railway it is 11s. 2d., which is practically 100 per cent. more than in this State. In South Australia it is 13s. 11d. per ton, which is getting up to what I say is a payable basis. In Victoria, it is 7s., which is 30 per cent. more than here, and in New South Wales it is 6s. 8d., or 20 per cent. more than in this State. In addition, we know that last year, and this year too, the railways were unable to provide haulage for the superphosphate, and we had to pay a subsidy up to 22s. 6d. a ton for road transport.

I went into the question of comparative charges for haulage of wheat in this State and the Eastern States and I found, again taking the 150-mile basis, that the figures were as follows:—Western Australia, 12s. 6d. a ton; Commonwealth, 13s. 10d.; South Australia, 15s. 1d.; Victoria, 12s. 2d.; and New South Wales, 14s. 3d. With the exception of Victoria, Western Australia provides the lowest freight for wheat. The average amount received for the haulage of wheat is 1.41d. per ton mile, and the average haulage cost for all goods in this State is 1.74d. per ton mile. I believe, despite that, that we would find a profit is made on the haulage of wheat because again we have got full trucks and compact loads, and the actual cost would be less than that which would apply to miscellaneous cargoes. Although the average amount received for the haulage of wheat is 1.41d. per ton per mile, the rate for second class goods is 6.91d. per ton per mile. The volume of wheat hauled by the railways constitutes 27.65 per cent. of the total tonnage hauled by our railways, and it is hauled at considerably less than the average cost of moving other commodities.

I also went into the question of freight on agricultural machinery, and in comparing our costs with those of the Eastern States I found again that, with the exception of New South Wales, the freight is less here than in any other State. It is the same with wool, except that in that case the Commonwealth railway system was the only one that carried wool at a lesser rate, for 150 miles, than Western Australia. Victoria is the only State to charge a lesser freight rate for chaff than Western Australia. So, members can see that certain concessions must be set off against the adverse monetary position so ably outlined by the member for Irwin-Moore the other night when putting up his case for the wheatgrowers and pastoralists

of this State. It must also be remembered that Australia has a great overseas loan indebtedness. For the purpose of assisting the primary producer, we permit the operation of an adverse exchange rate of 25 per cent.

The Minister for Railways: We have no option.

Mr. STYANTS: The people of Australia have to find that. I heard the Treasurer on one occasion say—and the financial statements bear this out, too—that it takes 47 per cent. of the income of this Government to meet its overseas indebtedness. One gets some idea of the millions of money that have to leave this country to meet interest on overseas loans. The people of Australia are paying 25 per cent. in addition for the benefit of the primary producers. I have no objection to that, but when we are summing up the benefits being conferred by any particular industry on the taxpayers, it is as well to consider the concessions being given by the taxpayers to that industry.

I feel that perhaps the member for Irwin-Moore was suffering under what I have found to exist to a large extent amongst wheat farmers, namely, a persecution complex. I believe, however, that if the wheat-growers knew all the facts they would realise that, apart from the actual cash return they are getting for their commodities, the taxpayer of Australia is giving them a certain amount of assistance. I think the hon. member put up a particularly good case, from his point of view, but he stated only a portion of the facts, and a portion can, in some cases, be very misleading.

Mr. Ackland: Like you are doing now.

Mr. STYANTS: The hon. member will probably have an opportunity of showing the fallacies in my remarks. The other matter I want to deal with is a particular fetish of mine; it is the question of homes. We have always had, not only in this State but in Australia, a shortage of homes. Because of the six years of war, when little or nothing was done in the way of building homes in any State, with the exception of South Australia which broke away from its honourable agreement with the Commonwealth Government not to participate in any large schemes absorbing employment, outside of the requirements for the defence of the country, very few homes have been built in Australia. The position has been

particularly accentuated by the six years of war. I believe the housing position is now more acute than at any other time in our history. I know that because of the cramped and crowded conditions in many homes in this State a great number of friendships, which under ordinary circumstances would have lasted for a lifetime, are being ruined. There is a lot of unhappiness being caused among families, through in-laws living together. It is an undesirable state of affairs and I believe that if we could sum up the total of human unhappiness resulting from the housing shortage it would be colossal.

On reading the newspapers I am led to believe, in the case of both Commonwealth and State Governments, that though scores of targets have been set few bulls' eyes have been scored. The results, up to date, have been more in the category of magpies than of bulls' eyes. The Acting Premier is reported in the Press as having told the C.D.L. conference that the position is improving. He may have some knowledge that I have not, but from my observations I would say the position is deteriorating and has been deteriorating for the last six or seven years. The Acting Premier may have knowledge of facts not in my possession, or he may be like the boy who whistled in the dark to preserve his self-assurance. I will quote some cases of where I have endeavoured to get homes for people in necessitous circumstances, and will outline the position as I see it.

We should face the cold facts of the case, that not only are we not building sufficient homes to overtake the arrears—which were estimated at up to 10,000 homes when hostilities ceased a couple of years ago—but we are not even keeping up with the current demand. To substantiate that statement I would point out that, in answer to a question asked a few days ago, the Minister in charge of the State Housing Commission said that for the 12-months ended June, 1947, a total of 1,700 houses had been completed in this State. On looking up the register of marriages I found that 4,800 marriages took place in that period. It is reasonable to assume that the majority of those young couples would, under normal circumstances, require homes, and it is desirable from every angle that they should be able to live in homes of their own. That is so not only from the population angle, but to promote

their happiness, peace of mind and contentment, and to give the men a stake in the country. Nothing is more conducive to the impressing on a man of his responsibility and his stake in the country than having a home of his own—either totally his own property or in the course of purchase by him. From all angles it can be said to be desirable that each of those young couples should be in a position to live in their own home.

I will deal now with a matter arising out of a question that I asked the Premier a week or two ago in relation to the Government's election promise to provide homes for young married couples and two-unit families. Not only was that the election promise of the Premier, but the acting Premier always favoured that policy when in Opposition, and I have no doubt he is still of the same opinion, though he may not be able to implement it, and probably finds it more difficult now that he is on the Ministerial side of the House than when he was in Opposition. I recall his making an appeal to the Government last session, when he was Leader of the Opposition, to give to those young married couples—especially those with finance of their own, very often accumulated at great sacrifice to themselves—consideration in the matter of permits to build. I was pleased to find my mind running along the same lines, because I have always advocated that policy.

I think it is in many instances unfair that couples married during or prior to the war, where the husband went into the Forces and the wife either into the Forces or other employment, should not be allowed to build. Such couples set about providing for their future, saving up in order to accumulate sufficient money to obtain homes of their own when hostilities ceased, but now those with larger families, who often had equal or better opportunity to provide homes for themselves before the war, receive preference. They are given an absolute preference, while the young married couples are completely ostracised. I am extremely sorry that the Premier has not been able to implement his election promise in relation to two-unit families.

I can quote the case of an elderly couple who were among those that took the brunt of the early days on the Goldfields. They are now both well up in years. The wife's health broke down and the doctor gave her a

certificate saying that she had to move to a coastal area. She asked me what her chances were and I said, "Now that there has been a change of Government I think you will have a chance of building a small home at the coast." She selected Esperance, and sent in the doctor's certificate, showing that she was compelled to get away from the Goldfield's climate, together with the plans and specifications necessary for a modest home. The home was to consist of one room, measuring 14 ft. by 20 ft., with a verandah. I received notice back from the State Housing Commission that, because only two persons were to be housed, the permit had been refused.

Bearing in mind the Premier's promise—I know it was genuine and that he intended to carry it out if possible—I decided to go over the head of the State Housing Commission, and appealed to the Premier, who is in charge of that department. After a lapse of eight or nine weeks I received in reply a letter endorsing the action of the State Housing Commission because there were only two people to be housed. It also pointed out that the provision of a doctor's certificate meant practically nothing, because if medical certificates were taken into account in such cases it would not be possible to provide sufficient homes for all those who would be able to obtain such certificates. I do not know whether the Premier and the officials of the State Housing Commission think that the integrity of doctors can be nullified with the payment of a fee of 10s. 6d., representing the cost of a medical certificate, or whether people who have broken down in health are not to be given any consideration because, after rearing a family, they are just two old people back where they started and are now merely Darby and Joan.

The Minister for Education: Unfortunately there is a great number in poor health.

Mr. STYANTS: That is so.

The Minister for Education: It is not a question of the health certificate but of the large number in such circumstances.

Mr. STYANTS: I want to proceed with the story to indicate what happened in consequence of intervention by the Premier. There has been a great deal of satisfaction

on the Goldfields with regard to the Workers' Homes Board and, in view of the circumstances surrounding the case I am mentioning, I approached the Premier with a request that he should send some of the Housing Commission officials to the fields. In due course the secretary, the officer in charge of the issuing of permits and the materials officer proceeded to Kalgoorlie and the Premier asked me to make arrangements for the old couple to see the secretary, Mr. Bond, with a view to ascertaining whether some arrangement could not be reached. In the meantime, after the rebuff from the Housing Commission the old people succeeded in purchasing some second-hand material in the form of an old house at Laverton. After discussing the position with the secretary, the Premier notified me that he was prepared to instruct the State Housing Commission that the old couple should be issued with a permit enabling them to purchase a very limited quantity of new material for their one-roomed shack at Esperance. I certainly hope that a more liberal view will be taken of the needs of two-unit families than was disclosed in this particular instance.

I desire to revert to a complaint I have advanced in this House on more than one occasion. I refer to the number of houses built in the metropolitan area compared with those erected in country districts. It must be borne in mind that the population outside the metropolitan area represents about half that of the whole State and yet we find there are about three times the number of State-Commonwealth rental houses being built in the metropolis than there are in the rural areas. That is wrong from many points of view. The country people have just as much right to participate in the cheap rentals and the extra housing accommodation provided by that scheme as have the people in the city. From the point of view of decentralisation, it has everything to commend it. I have beside me a cutting from "The West Australian" published one day this week indicating that from the inception of the Commonwealth-State rental housing scheme to this year, 920 houses have been completed and occupied. Of these 702 had been completed in the metropolitan area as against 218 in the country districts. The particulars also showed that in the metropolitan area 512 houses were under construction and in the rural areas only 133.

I raised this issue when I was sitting on the ministerial side of the House and I still say such a state of affairs is wrong from every point of view. It is wrong from the point of view of the claim that country people, representing half the population of the State, should receive adequate consideration and, as I indicated earlier, it is wrong from the standpoint of decentralisation. There is plenty of work available in the rural areas, but people will not go there because of the lack of housing accommodation. People are certainly not anxious to go out-back while housing can be provided in abundance in the metropolitan area. I hope that the provision of homes will at least be on a fifty-fifty basis and that the same will apply to the issuing of the permits by the State Housing Commission.

Last week I asked a question regarding the number of permits that had been issued during the months of May, June and July, for the construction of houses involving the use of bricks. I had a special reason for taking that action, and I was told that in May six had been issued, in June, 14 and in July, 21. On the other hand I had been told by one of the highest officials of the State Housing Commission that there had been no permits issued since April for dwellings involving the use of bricks, because they had issued excess permits requiring 10,000,000 bricks. Thus it would appear that a representative of the people, in the shape of myself, has not been given correct information by an official of the State Housing Commission. The Acting Premier has said that the position is improving, but I have my doubts about that. I will give particulars of two or three of the many cases I have on hand, and I would like to be informed as to what were the necessitous circumstances of the six people in May, of the 14 in June and the 21 in July, that enabled them to secure permits, because I have a case that merits special consideration but for which a permit has not been issued.

Mr. YATES: A number of those may have been T.B. cases.

Mr. STYANTS: I have one case of a man who is a returned soldier and served in the 1914-18 war. His health has been impaired as a result of his service overseas to such an extent that he finds it necessary to go to the Hollywood Repatriation Hospital very frequently. When the recent hostilities broke out, the old war spirit was aroused in him

and he volunteered. He was accepted for home defence and routine military work so as to enable the Forces overseas to be fully maintained and equipped. He has quite a nice home at Victoria Park and when he was accepted for service he let it to a tenant. When in due course he was discharged from the Army he found that the tenant in his house was a returned soldier and was a protected person because he had been overseas. Consequently this sick returned soldier was himself unable to occupy his own home, and he is living in an old disused asbestos shop. The returned soldier who is living in his home has one of his own at Maylands but he cannot obtain possession of it because the tenant there is also a protected person, being a returned soldier with overseas service.

For the sake of the soldier whose health has been impaired by his war service, I saw the man who was living in the third home and found he has ample funds to enable him to erect a home and he certainly does not want any Government assistance. If he could get a permit enabling him to build a house he would be prepared to vacate the one he is occupying, and the owner would be able to resume occupation of it. The man whose health is impaired and has to go to Hollywood frequently for treatment would be able to get into his home at Victoria Park. Thus if a permit could be issued in the case I have mentioned, three families would be provided with their own homes. I went to the extent of appealing to the chairman of the State Housing Commission to see whether some special concession could not be extended to this particular man, but I was informed that as the number of permits had been overdrawn involving the use of so many bricks, such consideration could not be extended. If what I have described is not an exceptional case, I do not know what would be regarded as one.

Then there is another instance of a man who has a very sick child that has been in hospital for a very long period. He is able to finance the building of a home for himself but he cannot secure the necessary permit. He has three children including the one that has been in hospital for a long time. He has a doctor's certificate to the effect that when the child ultimately leaves hospital, it must be housed under favourable conditions if its health is to be improved. Because he has not been able to secure the permit, this

man, his wife and three children are separated. They are living in two different places because they cannot get accommodation together. I say that that is a necessitous case. I have also the case of a war widow, a woman whose husband went west at Singapore, a member of the 2/41st machine-gun section. She has three children. She made application for a war service home and was told she had quite a good case, but it would take at least two years to get a home. Yet she is a widow with three dependent boys.

The Chief Secretary: That would be a Commonwealth matter, would it not?

Mr. STYANTS: Yes, but it is a matter of shortage of homes just the same. I understand that the State Housing Commission has the supervision. As a matter of fact I know the man in charge of war service homes who, I believe, is principal draughtsman to the State Housing Commission. All this shows that the housing position has not improved. The widow then decided that she could finance a home if she could get a permit to build, and the home she desired would not have involved the use of bricks. She is a sensible type of woman who has taken care of her money, and she wanted a modest home of weatherboard and asbestos. But she has not been able to get a permit from the Housing Commission to build even a home of that sort.

Yet we read from time to time in the newspapers reams of figures to show the number of homes being built. Of course, if one keeps repeating figures either in the newspaper or to oneself and multiplying them over and over again, one is apt to reach a frame of mind to believe that the position is improving. Possibly a similar atmosphere is being created to that being created in the Press campaign about getting cargoes from the Eastern States during the last few months. Yet, the answers given to the question asked by the member for East Perth showed that in January, February and March of this year about 10,000 tons of goods came here from the Eastern States in excess of the total during April, May and June. Possibly the same technique is being employed—getting plenty of figures into the newspapers to delude the people who are not in need of a home that the position is improving. But people living under unfavourable conditions cannot be deluded all the time; sooner or later they will raise a cry.

Housing is the most urgent problem the Government has on its hands. That statement was made by the member for Canning and I agree with him. Despite every effort on the part of the present Government to improve the position, it has not been able to achieve anything more than the previous Government. Members will recall that after the capitulation of Germany, when the outlook in the Pacific improved to such an extent that the Americans said in so many words that they were able to handle the position there, the previous Government released 300 workers from the services so that they could go back to the timber industry. After the cessation of hostilities, the Government employed every available person that would go into the timber industry and took every skilled artisan available for the building of homes in the hope of overtaking the current demands for homes. The present Government cannot do any more.

The situation is a most difficult one. Not only in Western Australia is there a shortage of homes; a similar shortage prevails throughout Australia and in all parts of the world, and is a classical example of what happens, when, for six years, countries cease to produce for current needs and blow their substance away in smoke for defence or other reasons. I sincerely hope that the Government will be able to improve the position, because I know that the sum of human unhappiness prevailing is colossal. The privations and the deplorable condition in which many of our people are living are heart-breaking.

I regret that the member for Geraldton is not in his seat at the moment, because I propose to criticise some of the statements he made yesterday and my criticism may, in a measure, reflect upon his sincerity. The hon. member made some very nasty and provocative statements, and uttered them in a very acrimonious tone. He misconstrued remarks that had been made by the member for Collie regarding the working conditions of the Collie miners. The member for Collie—I am speaking from memory—said the miners were working under deplorable conditions and that the amenities were deplorable. The member for Geraldton got on to the sob-stuff and asked why the Labour Government in previous years had not protected the miners. When the hon. member was asked what the accident mortality rate was, he had not the vaguest idea. He could

not even tell us whether the rate had increased or decreased over the years.

I have been down mines in Collie. Before going down, my idea of a coalmine was a spacious tunnel, well-lighted, with the sides white-washed to intensify the lighting. I had seen moving pictures of underground stables for the pit ponies, places clean enough for the average person to eat his crib in. But when I went below, I saw nothing but a pitch black tunnel, in some parts a mile or a mile-and-a-quarter from the pit mouth, and not a light to assist the men going down or returning. Several times, to my discomfiture, I found that the height of the tunnel was insufficient to allow a man to walk upright. It was fortunate for me that I was wearing a crash helmet; for I knocked my head on the supports several times. When the amenities provided for the coalminers are compared with those provided for the miners on the Golden Mile, there is no exaggeration in the statement of the member for Collie that they are deplorable. They are certainly not in the same street.

The member for Geraldton asked why the Labour Government had not improved conditions there. The hon. member knows as well as I do why they have not been improved to a great extent. The reasons are that the attempt made by the Labour Government and this House to improve the conditions have been stood aside by another place, a House elected on a most undemocratic franchise, a property franchise, the roll for which consists of only one-third of the people, while only about one-third of those eligible to vote do so. The member for Geraldton graced another place with his presence for a great number of years as one of the members for the Central Province. As a test of the sincerity of the member for Geraldton, in his solicitude for the coalminers, I decided to ascertain how he cast his vote on two measures that had been sent to another place from this Chamber during recent years. One of the measures was the Coal Mine Workers (Pensions) Bill. The member for Geraldton, who now professes so much solicitude for the welfare of the miners at Collie, voted against the second reading of the measure.

Mr. May: Shame!

Mr. STYANTS: The other measure dealt with coal production. It was brought forward last session and the member for Geraldton cast a silent vote against it. He did not

speak to the measure, but voted against the second reading. Even if he did not approve of the clauses dealing with coal production, the Bill contained many other clauses providing for additional amenities for the miners, and the hon. member did not think it even worth while to vote for the second reading. He considered that it was not worth while to discuss those clauses which had for their objective the betterment of the conditions of the miners. The Bill did not reach the Committee stage. The hon. member said some most extraordinary things in connection with miners' pensions. I do not want to misquote him, and for that reason I have turned up what he actually said on the Coal Mine Workers (Pensions) Bill. Fortunately for the coalminers there was a majority in another place more modern-minded than was the member for Geraldton, as that measure was passed. I quote from "Hansard," 1943, page 994. This is what the member for Geraldton said—

The information given by Sir Hal Colebatch and Mr. Parker cannot be ignored. Mr. Parker quoted figures which I have since forgotten, but they were contained in the Report of the Royal Commissioner, Dr. Herman, who inquired into this industry. No matter how sympathetically inclined one might be towards the very fine spirit which envisages a pensions scheme for the men engaged in unpleasant work, as the coalminers are, I still feel we must do our duty to the people as a whole, and that, when we have the report of a man so well qualified as Dr. Herman, who went into the ramifications of the industry, this Parliament would not be justified in passing a measure such as this. The statements made by members last week when discussing this Bill, that pensions are granted to judges and civil servants, are like the flowers that bloom in the spring—they have nothing to do with the case.

Probably the member for Geraldton, as an ex-civil servant, could not connect up the granting of pensions to people who work possibly 38 hours per week in most congenial circumstances with the granting of pensions to men who toil in the bowels of the earth and spend most of their time in darkness.

Mr. Marshall: They never see the sunlight.

Mr. STYANTS: They are shut out from God's sunlight during their working hours; and in the winter it is almost dark when they go into the pit and it is verging on darkness when they come out. I do not object to the granting of pensions to civil servants. I am a believer in pensions.

Every man and woman who, through ill-health, invalidity or old-age, cannot work, should receive a pension. The hon. member thinks it quite right that judges and civil servants should receive pensions, but not the men who go into the bowels of the earth to mine the coal to enable industries to be carried on.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: I have seen the light since then.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: The *£ s. d.* light.

Mr. STYANTS: In 1946, only last year, when the Bill relating to coal production was before another place, he voted against the second reading of the measure, so he must have seen the light only since he retired from the august Chamber which he graced for so many years. He went on to say—I am quoting from the same volume of "Hansard"—

I am not qualified to speak on this subject, but Dr. Hislop, who is not in the Chamber at the moment, said that the diseases suffered by goldminers were much more serious and prevalent than those suffered by coalminers.

He is working one off against the other, if he can. Continuing—

Let us compare the conditions under which these two sets of miners work. As a matter of fact, they are not to be compared. The coalminer has conditions much preferable to those of the goldminer.

As I said, the member for Geraldton is an ex-civil servant and for a great number of years he sat pretty as a member of the Legislative Council of this State. His knowledge of the conditions of either the goldminer or the coalminer would be simply a nodding acquaintance. The hon. member continued—

I would like to say also that the Collie coalfield had been going for some years, and I think Mr. Miles is entitled to commendation for his statement, which the Royal Commissioner's findings substantiate, that there was an unholy alliance between the mine owners and the mine workers.

Mr. Miles is another person who has graced a seat in another place. The member for Geraldton continued—

For many years the people of Western Australia had to pay a much higher price for Collie coal than was actually necessary. True, we would rather pay a higher price for a local product than to rely on imports from other States.

I have looked up what Mr. Miles said. It is as follows:—

It seems to me that the Government thinks more of the Collie miners getting a pension than it does of the interest of the taxpayers.

That is one statement commended by the member for Geraldton.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Is that the only one, though?

Mr. STYANTS: Mr. Miles goes on to say—

I believe that arrangements could be made whereby coal could be produced at a lower cost to the taxpayer by the same number or more men being employed. I think the miners are entitled to a pensions Bill, or some pensions scheme, under conditions that are fair to the shareholders of the company. This measure proposes to interfere with the articles of association of the Amalgamated Collieries Ltd. Is that not so?

Then there was a chorus from the other members, "Yes." Mr. Miles continued—

This is not the proper place to interfere with those articles of association. If a pensions scheme is desired, then the workers and owners should pay, and it should be part of the cost of production of the coal. It was for those reasons that I opposed the previous Bill and I oppose this one for the same reason.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Who is speaking now?

Mr. STYANTS: The one the hon. member said should be commended.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Who was it?

Mr. STYANTS: Mr. Miles. The member for Geraldton proceeded—

At a time like the present our railways and other services might be considerably curtailed if we did not have Collie coal. Dr. Herman's report impartially sets out the position. What is the use of the Government appointing a Royal Commissioner like Dr. Herman to advise on the industry if it does not endeavour to give effect to his recommendations?

That is the hon. member's strategy. Dr. Herman reports on how the industry should be conducted, but it requires a great stretch of the imagination to connect that up with the granting of pensions to the coalminers. It was a red herring across the trail. That is the political strategy in which the member for Geraldton has become so adept during his years in Parliament. He went on to say—

Dr. Herman strongly urged the Government to spend a fair amount of money in order to determine, once for all, whether the Irwin coalfields were worth prospecting. Has the

Government made any attempt to act on that recommendation? I maintain that it has not. True, a small amount of money was made available and some investigations were carried out at Eradu, but nothing like the exhaustive examination that Dr. Herman suggested be made at Irwin.

What connection can there be between the granting of a pensions scheme for worn-out miners and whether the Government carried out Dr. Herman's recommendation or whether there was a favourable prospect of drilling for coal at Eradu and Irwin?

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: None whatever.

Mr. STYANTS: None whatever! It was one of those scents across the trail, set off at a tangent for the purpose of confusing the issue so far as the vote of hon. members was concerned.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: You are wonderful! Absolutely!

Mr. STYANTS: The hon. member handed it out, and I hope he is good enough sportsman to demonstrate his ability to take it when it is coming back.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: You are wonderful!

Mr. STYANTS: There is a little bit more, and this is really a gem.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Now we are coming to it. Saving the best to the last!

Mr. STYANTS: The hon. member said—

The Collie coalfield has been operating for many years and the men have had a union for many years. What are the unions in this country doing that they have not inaugurated social welfare schemes for their members? Why do they not follow the policy of unions in the Old Country and bring in schemes of their own to ensure that when their members fall ill, become invalided or reach old age, they will have something to fall back upon?

Is that not a gem, coming from a man who says he has the welfare of the workers at heart?

Member: When he is after their votes.

Mr. STYANTS: Did he tell the Geraldton lumpers on the bustings that that was his idea—that the unions should provide their own pension scheme?

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Why did you not come up?

Mr. STYANTS: He did not tell that to the 1871 pensioners whose case he pleaded before the Government. In passing, I would point out that I have always been of the

opinion that the 1871 pensions Act should have applied to wage-earners, and have always recorded my vote in that way when a vote has been taken in this House on the matter. I have always believed they are entitled to it, and I believe now that the wages man is so entitled. But, to show the rank inconsistency of the hon. member, he says to the Collie miners, "If you want a pension scheme you will have to pay for it out of your own pockets"; but he tells the 1871 men that, in his opinion, they should get a pension and they should get it without making any contribution.

Mr. Triat: They were his electors!

Mr. STYANTS: Just imagine anyone today putting up a proposition that any pensions scheme providing for invalidity or old age should be financed entirely by the workers themselves! It is preposterous! It is a recognised custom, and has been for the last half century, that industry and the employee during the period of his working life should provide sufficient to keep him in a reasonable degree of comfort in his old age.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Quite right.

Mr. STYANTS: The hon. member does not want that.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: I do now, though.

Mr. STYANTS: I am very pleased to hear that assurance from the hon. member, that he is not as reactionary as I thought he was. The mind of anyone who could suggest that a pensions scheme should be built up entirely out of the meagre earnings of the worker and that the industry should not contribute is in the Middle Ages, or at least fifty years back. The hon. member went on to say—

We are in danger of sapping the initiative of our people. This aspect ought to receive careful consideration.

If a working man has to provide a pension out of the meagre earnings he receives for the labour he gives, that is certainly going to sap his initiative. I do not think we need worry a great deal over that. I want to deal with what happened after the tea adjournment. During the debate prior to the adjournment, the member for Murchison asked the member for Geraldton how he voted on this measure. After having probably had a look at "Hansard" and discover-

ing that he perhaps would not come out as well as he would have liked to, so far as his attitude at this stage of the Bill was concerned, the member for Geraldton tried, by what I thought was a masterpiece of thinly-veiled evasion and subterfuge, to get around it. The question asked was how he voted on the measure. He came back after tea and evaded the point. He did not say how he voted on the measure. He said that this measure had been passed by a substantial majority at the second reading and at the third reading. It was, but not with the assistance of the member for Geraldton! It was carried because there were sufficient members in that Chamber who were democratic and modern-minded enough to realise it is the duty of industry to provide something for its employees when they get beyond their working stage.

The Minister for Works: The second reading passed without a division.

Mr. STYANTS: The Minister for Works is speaking without his book.

Hon. A. H. Panton: As usual.

The Minister for Works: But not without my memory.

Mr. STYANTS: If the Minister for Works requires me to, I can read the division and how members voted. It is recorded on page 1000 of "Hansard," and the name of the member for Geraldton appears amongst the "Noes." The voting was 16 for and eight against.

The Minister for Works: You should say what the division was upon. It was not on the second or third reading.

Mr. STYANTS: It was on the second reading.

The Minister for Works: It was not.

Mr. STYANTS: The Minister can peruse "Hansard," the same as I did. The Minister came in with what was intended to be a let-out for his colleague, but his bomb has turned out to be a squib.

The Minister for Works: It has not. It will be competent for somebody else to give the terms of that particular division.

Hon. A. H. Panton: The member for Kalgoorlie is talking about what happened in another place.

Mr. STYANTS: The Minister is not going to be like the member for Geraldton, putting out false trails.

The Minister for Works: You will not give the terms.

Mr. STYANTS: I am going to stick to what I started with. The member for Geraldton did not tell us that he had spoken against the measure, and voted against it on the second reading.

The Minister for Works: He did not vote against it on the second reading.

Mr. STYANTS: It was lucky for the Collie miners that there were sufficient members in the Chamber democratically-minded enough to recognise it is an accepted custom that when a worker, through invalidity or old age or some other cause, is unable to carry on, the industry, plus some deduction from his wages, should make provision for him. The old idea that existed 50 years ago that the worker could be used up while he could produce a dividend for the employer and then be thrown on the industrial scrap-heap has luckily gone by the board.

The Minister for Works: I quite agree; but that is not the matter in dispute here.

Mr. STYANTS: I do not want to be led off the trail. I know of at least three or four names that could be applied to evasion and subterfuge of that kind, and none of them is very pleasing or flattering. The speech of the member for Geraldton on the pensions Bill discloses his principles, as far as the workers are concerned, naked and, I am afraid, unashamed.

Member: He is entitled to his opinion.

Mr. STYANTS: If he will tell the Geraldton lumpers, railway men and industrialists that their pension schemes should be established entirely by deductions from their wages, he will not be the member for Geraldton after the next election.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: You did not think I would last time.

Mr. STYANTS: I did not think much about it at all. I want to get off that unpleasant subject and deal with a matter that chiefly concerns my electorate, namely, mining. I am not going into it at any great length because it was dealt with very fully and ably last night by the member for

Yilgarn-Coolgardie. There are, however, one or two points that I want to touch on. I am not at all satisfied with the attitude of the Commonwealth Government towards this industry. Unfortunately remedies for its parlous condition are outside the control of the State Government. There is the question of the Commonwealth gold tax, or a bounty, to be paid to the industry.

There is also the question of the price of gold. That is outside the jurisdiction of even the Commonwealth Government. It is arranged, I understand, on a reciprocal basis by two committees, one in Great Britain, and the other in America. There is one question I want to touch on, and it concerns a matter that has been ventilated and, I am afraid, ventilated for the purpose of creating an atmosphere. It affects the goldmining industry very much. I refer to the suggestion of increases in railway freights and fares. I regard "The West Australian" newspaper as the official organ of the Government, and on two or three occasions in the last three or four months it has made the suggestion that an increase in fares and freights is inevitable.

The Minister for Railways: It did not come from the Government.

Mr. STYANTS: I am pleased to know that that suggestion did not emanate from the Government. I realise that a good case could be put up for an increase in fares and freights. It has to be recognised that, in most instances, they are as cheap as or cheaper than on most railways in Australia, and there have been enormous increases in the cost of running the railways. Yet, no increases in fares or freights have been made. I also point out that the goldmining industry is at a disadvantage in that it cannot get any increase in the price of the commodity it produces to compensate for increases in the cost of production. The industry has got to the stage now when, if there is a substantial increase in freights and fares—not only on mining materials but foodstuffs—the inevitable result will be that the cost of living and the basic wage will rise. If such an event does not wipe out the goldmining industry altogether it will affect it very seriously in that only high grade ore will be mined. There will be consequent loss of employment and the industry will be on the down grade.

I hope there will be no increase in railway freights. I believe that freights are principally paid by those in the country. Yet, the railways are just as essential for the people in the metropolitan area, who today are getting fares at a lesser rate in some instances than they did in 1914—an fact that can be substantiated by the Minister for Railways—as they are for those in the country. But still they will not pay anything in proportion to the amount the country people will have to pay if there is an increase. I hope the Government will continue to regard the railways, not as a business concern, but as a Government utility by which development can take place throughout the State.

I want to deal with a small matter that was mentioned by the member for Forrest and which, no doubt, concerns his electorate a great deal as well as that of the member for Nelson. I refer to the continuance of the Apple and Pear Board. It will be remembered that at the outbreak of war no ships were available and there were no overseas markets. It was realised at the time, that if we desired to keep our orchards—a very valuable asset to the State—in a reasonable state of repair and production we would have to set up some kind of authority to look after their interests. I had no objection to that. In fact, I think it was a good move. I think that even the colossal amount of money lost by the Apple and Pear Board was worth while because of the fact that when the war was over we had our orchards in a high state of productivity. But I want most to criticise the inefficiency and lack of business acumen displayed by the board.

The information I am about to give is somewhat astonishing. I would not have cared if, to compensate for the huge losses that had to be made, the public had been given ample supplies of high quality fruit at a reasonable price. I believe that could have been done if different methods had been employed, and there would have been no more, or perhaps not as much, loss as has been incurred by this particular board. I have some figures here quoted by the Commonwealth Minister dealing with the operations of the board. I have travelled through the apple and pear districts of this State, and was astonished and horrified at the amount of fruit lying on the ground under the trees and being ploughed in.

was once travelling by car through the Bridgetown district, and on my way home I saw a lot of apples on the ground. I went in to the orchard to see if I could purchase some. I asked the owner if he would sell me a case. He said, "They are not mine. They belong to the Apple and Pear Board. I am not permitted to sell you any or give you any." After some discussion with him he told me that on the average he was paid for 1,400 bushel cases of apples, and that the most the board had ever taken possession of in any one year was 800 cases. He said, "I am going around to the other side of the shed to milk the cow, so if you go into the orchard and get a few apples I would not see you."

That was the position of the growers. They were given a certain amount on tree measurement. The measurer would estimate that there were 1400 or 1500 bushel cases and would say "We will pay you so much per bushel and will pay for the cases, the picking, packing and transport." I do not think the grower has become affluent on the prices received. The average price over the period of operation of the board has been, for apples, 2s. 11d. and for pears 3s. 9½d. per bushel. The "bushel" mentioned there is the bushel case. In addition to that, for the years 1942-1944 there could be added about 2d. on apples and pears, and for the years 1944-46 should be added 6d. per case, so the grower has not become wealthy on the prices received.

Mr. Leahy: It has kept their heads above water.

Mr. STYANTS: That is so. It has preserved the asset in the orchards of this State, but let us look at the financial returns of the board. The following table, prepared for the Commonwealth Minister for Commerce, is interesting, and sets out the financial position of the board from 1940 to 1946. In 1940 the trading profit and loss is shown as a loss of £321,294, and the payment on undelivered fruit at £269,964, while the overall result was a deficit of £591,258. I recall that during that year famine prices were charged for fruit of poor quality. During the last couple of years the quality has improved considerably. I know the prices quoted by the member for Forrest for apples and pears in the Eastern States to be correct. In Sydney, Granny Smiths are from 11d. to 1s. 1d. per pound, and yet we see colossal losses resulting from the opera-

tions of this board. I would not have minded so much had the public been given a bountiful supply of fruit at lower rates.

The Minister for Lands: Have they ever issued a balance sheet for the administration?

Mr. STYANTS: This is in the nature of a balance sheet. In 1941 the deficit under trading profit or loss was £727,655, and the payments on undelivered fruit £864,336. In a period of twelve months fruit to that value had been paid for without delivery being taken by the board. It was allowed to be ploughed into the ground. For that year the overall result was a loss of £1,591,991. For 1942 the trading profit and loss showed a credit of £168,294, with the payment on undelivered fruit at £454,815, and the overall result was a loss of £286,521. In 1943 the trading profit and loss showed a credit of £486,844, while the payment on undelivered fruit was £558,020, and the overall result was a debit of £71,186. In 1944 the trading profit and loss showed a debit of £86,347, while the payment on undelivered fruit was £736,910, and the overall result was a loss of £823,257.

For 1945, subject to small adjustments, the trading profit and loss showed a credit of £829,286, while the payment on undelivered fruit was £581,600, and the overall result a credit of £247,686. For 1946 the estimated position shows the trading profit and loss with a debit of £49,713, the payment on undelivered fruit at £770,287, while the overall result is a debit of £820,000. Taking the operations of the board over the whole period of its operation, we find that the trading profit and loss shows a credit of £299,415, while the amount paid out for fruit that rotted in the orchards and was ploughed into the ground was £4,235,932, giving an overall result as a debit of £3,866,527.

If we reduce or extend the loss of £4,235,932 and allow 6½ cases to the £1, we find 2/11 or 3s. per bushel paid for undelivered fruit, as there were 27,000,000 bushels of fruit purchased by the board but not delivered, being ultimately ploughed into the ground.

Mr. Reynolds: They could not get fruit cases or nails, and there was a shortage of labour.

Mr. STYANTS: The policy was entirely wrong. Had they put on the market ample supplies of fruit at a price that the average

person could afford to pay, the financial return would have been better. Members will recall that from about 1941 to 1942 fruit was selling at famine prices. The man on anything approaching the basic wage was not in a position to buy it for his family, and that is substantially the position today. Now we find that although the orchardist is getting only a fraction over 3s. a bushel for his apples, the retail price charged for the cheapest is about 5½d. per pound. A couple of Granny Smith apples will weigh about a pound and cost 5½d., which is about the cheapest price per pound paid for any other variety.

If anyone can tell me how the man on the basic wage or on a reasonable margin above it can provide his wife and three or four children with fruit at that price, it will solve a mystery for me. We find that approximately 27,000,000 bushels of fruit has been paid for, but has gone to waste under the supervision of the Apple and Pear Board, while the people have been paying famine prices for it and in many cases could not get it at all. While I would not oppose the continuance of the board, if the growers require it, I think it should adopt a different policy. If one goes to the markets one cannot get a bushel case of apples for less than 11s. 6d. or 12s. 6d. Surely that gives sufficient margin of profit, after paying all the costs involved, to show a better financial return. I am given to understand that the average price paid for the apples is about 3s. per bushel.

Mr. Reynolds: The price is 4s. 3d. for top lines.

Mr. STYANTS: Here we have set out the position up to 1946, and the average prices up to that date were higher than they are this year, but that does not make any difference to the bungling and inefficiency of the board or its lack of business acumen. They were allowed 6d. for picking, 11d. for packing, round about 2s. 3d. for cases and cardboard and about 4d. for transport to the station. Thus, actually, with the 3s. for the fruit, they were getting their supplies for about 7s. a bushel and the cheapest rate at which fruit could be purchased in town was considerably in excess of what it is today.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Have you figures showing the quantity of fruit purchased and marketed on behalf of the growers; what they got for it and so on?

Mr. STYANTS: I have only the record of the payments made for the undelivered fruit and I have no other particulars. However, it all discloses a very deplorable position. As I mentioned earlier, I would not oppose the continuation of the board but it should be given to understand that if it is to be allowed to proceed, the fiasco regarding prices and so forth must be altered in future.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Do you suggest that better fruit could have been delivered?

Mr. STYANTS: Would the hon. member say that the fruit that it paid for, was not better than the fruit that dropped off the trees and was left in the orchard?

Mr. Reynolds: No.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Not inferior to what was marketed.

Mr. STYANTS: In the history of boards, I think this is one of the greatest calamities so far as financial returns and service rendered to the public are concerned. I am not growling about the £4,500,000 paid for undelivered fruit. I believe it was worth that to the consumers of fruit in the Commonwealth in order that the orchards might be preserved in reasonable condition and in high production so that the people could benefit after the war.

I desire next to touch upon roads and particularly main roads. When travelling around the State recently I noticed that in many districts the authorities were ploughing up and re-grading roads, thereby providing much better ones than are to be seen in the Eastern Goldfields districts. I believe that had it not been for the intervention of the war, there would now be a bituminised road from Southern Cross to Coolgardie. If there is any portion of the road system in the outback centres that deserves such a road, it is that portion of the Great Eastern Highway. Not only does it serve a district with a population of approximately 30,000 but it represents a stretch of 140 miles of the Great Eastern Highway, the main road between Western Australia and the Eastern States. I also noticed that at small country centres like Bunbury, Geraldton and Albany, where there is about one-fifth of the population that is to be found in the Eastern Goldfields, bitumen-surfaced roads are provided for the convenience of the people. I do not begrudge them that consideration, but I do submit a

claim on behalf of the Eastern Goldfields for equal attention. In support of that claim, I would quote the number of cars that use the roads and the population living in that part of the State.

I suggest that every possible effort be made by the Government to deal with that section of the Great Eastern Highway and to accord high priority to work on that particular stretch of road. At present much regrading is going on but, in my opinion, such regrading represents to a great extent a mere loss of money. Once the weather strikes the road and a few cars go over it, the surface will cut up and pothole. It will soon become almost impassable. I believe that the money that is now being spent on such work could be better utilised by providing for the complete bituminising of the section between Southern Cross and Coolgardie. If that cannot be done, then the portion of the road that is always giving the motorists trouble—I refer to the sections between Coolgardie and Bullabulling and between Bullabulling and Woolgongie—should receive prompt attention. If the work there is not done on a different basis, then with just regrading and spreading the gravel the result will be that the road surface will cut up and bog in winter and in summer will blow away as dust. I certainly hope a high priority will be given to that work in the near future.

The final matter I shall refer to is that members now sitting on the Opposition side of the House have been twitted on many occasions this session with having been in office for 14 years and we have been told that if everything necessary had not been done, then it was our fault. With all due respect to members on the Government side of the House, I would remind them that we were certainly in office for 14 years but never for one year were we in power.

Mr. Marshall: No, never!

Mr. STYANTS: Always there was another House standing over us. The parliamentary constitution of this State provides that before any legislation can find a place on the statute book, it must be passed by both Houses of Parliament. Legislation was submitted time after time in accordance with what the then Government thought was for the benefit of the people as a whole, yet those legislative proposals met their fate in another place.

The Minister for Works: Ninety per cent. of your legislation was passed.

Mr. STYANTS: I would not say the percentage was as high as that.

Mr. Graham: Even so, the 10 per cent. that was worth while was defeated.

Hon. A. H. Panton: And what was passed took us 14 years to get.

Mr. STYANTS: It is as well to remember what occurred prior to that period of 14 years, which started in 1933. The Mitchell Government was put out of power at that time mainly because it had been elected on the cry "Jobs for All." When it took over, the Labour Government found what was probably the most deplorable blot on the history of the State. About 5,000 single men were quartered in the Blackboy Hill camp. They were unemployed and were given food, together with an allowance of 5s. with which to buy tobacco.

The Minister for Works: Do you know why that was? It was because the previous Government had left an empty Treasury.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Cut that out!

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That excuse will not be available this time.

Mr. STYANTS: There was not one Government in Australia that could be blamed for the trouble experienced at that time. The depression that occurred in those days was man-made. There was an abundance of everything that was required, but the trouble was that the depression was engineered by financial experts from overseas. I do not blame the Mitchell Government for the conditions that obtained and the privation and semi-poverty that existed then. I do not think it would have made much difference what Government held the reins of office in those days. It could not get one shilling with which to buy anything.

The Minister for Works: That is right.

Mr. STYANTS: The fact remains that from 1933 to 1936, because of conditions that operated, a great percentage of the workers in Western Australia were on part-time jobs only. We created public works and in accordance with a man's responsibilities, whether he was single, married, or married and having a family, he was given so much work per week to enable him to provide the necessities of life. This continued until about 1936. From 1936 to 1939,

the employment position improved considerably, and while it was possible to do away with part-time employment there was still, in 1939 when the war broke out, a large number of our people unemployed.

Just before the war there was the greatest difficulty in getting a profitable or even any market overseas for our primary products. It was not a matter of getting an unprofitable price such as 3s. a bushel for our wheat; it was a matter of getting someone to buy it at any price. That is the condition of affairs that prevailed during six of the 14 years when Labour was in office, and we have been derided because we were in office and could not produce all the results that members on both sides of the House would have liked. From 1939 onwards, a large number of men left industry to enter the Services, and in 1941, when Japan entered the war, when the safety of this country was endangered, when for the first time an enemy was flying over our country, bombing and killing our citizens, and when Japanese submarines were shelling Sydney, conscription was introduced and hundreds of thousands of people were taken out of industry to serve in the Forces.

After the war, there came the demobilisation of the Forces, a work which took at least 18 months. Consequently, of the 14 years we were in office, but not in power, three years represented the depth of the depression, three years a period of semi-depression, six years a period of war when we had to marshal the whole of our forces for the defence of the country, and then 18 months for demobilising Service people and getting them back into industry. Members in fairness must admit that the period of 14 years was not one of great prosperity or one that permitted of great achievements.

I do not envy the Government or Ministers the tasks before them. I have some conception—not as much as a Cabinet Minister would have—of the great difficulties Ministers will have to face. The lot of a Minister in the State or Federal sphere is not a pleasant or happy one these days, because there is such a shortage of necessary commodities and because the materials and manpower available are insufficient to meet the requirements of the people. We knew all this before the election and told a good

straightforward story to the people. We admitted the existence of all the shortages—hospitals, schools, homes and various other things. From what I have gathered by reading the political speeches of members of the present Government, they gave the people to understand that the prevailing shortages had been brought about by bungling and inefficiency on the part of the Labour Government and that, if they were returned to office they would be able to remedy matters in a very short space of time.

I think the age of miracles has passed but, if the Government is able to do all it has promised, I shall be one of the first to offer congratulations. The position of the Government is rather an invidious one. It is in power by the grace of two Independents, and judging by the speeches made by those two members, I find it difficult to decide just what their attitude might be. Apparently they must have conferred upon certain matters before either of them spoke in the House, because both expressed the same sentiments and uttered the same veiled threats if the Government did not do certain things that affected them personally.

Last night I was raised to the clouds by the dissertation of the member for Maylands when he enlarged upon the high motives and principles that should characterise our public life. According to him we should sink all party differences; we should work as a happy family or, at any rate, if we did not, the Opposition should not to any great extent retard the efforts of the Government. Except on major issues, I do not think we are likely to have any grave disagreement with the Government. However, after being carried along in the clouds by the hon. member's high-motive speech, I was suddenly dashed into the sewers because of the threat to the Government—it could not be regarded as anything but a threat—that if their personal vanity was not appeased, they would seriously consider what their attitude to the Government would be. They complained that they had not been appointed to serve on Committees of this House.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The member for Maylands even became savage about it.

Mr STYANTS: If they decided to regard as a major issue something they thought to be detrimental to the people of the State and, as a result, would consider

whether they would support the Government, I could understand it, but if they want their personal vanity appeased by being appointed to places on committees, I, rather than see the Government go out, would offer my seat on the House Committee to either of those gentlemen.

Mr. Shearn: That is only a figment of your imagination.

Mr. STYANTS: So far as I am concerned, there will be no hostile or carping criticism of the Government. If the hon. member peruses his speech in "Hansard"—and I understand he has checked the report—that is the inference anyone would draw from it. Evidently the two hon. members presuppose that at any time they choose to call the tune against the Government, the Labour Opposition will fall in with them. For my part, it will have to be a much greater issue than the mere question of who is going to serve on the House Committee or the Printing Committee before they will have my support to put the Government out. The hon. member might even find himself on the other side of the House before the session is over. After reading the speeches of both those members, one can only conclude that there had been some collusion between the member for Maylands and the other half of the party.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: The better half.

Mr. STYANTS: Both uttered the same sentiments. I repeat that it will have to be a bigger issue that will influence me in voting against the continuance in office of the present Government. Members opposite have been elected by the people, certainly not with a majority, but with a sufficient number to carry on the Government with the assistance and by the grace of one Independent at any rate, and I think it is the duty of the Opposition to give it an opportunity to fulfil the promises it made to the people.

Mr. Shearn: That is the most satisfactory statement you have made.

Mr. STYANTS: I hope that the modern practice of passing the buck will not be indulged in. It seems to be quite the thing that if anybody undertakes to do something and is not able to do it then it is passed on to the Commonwealth Government. I hope that will not be brought into fashion here. I feel certain that the Government is as earnest as we on this side were and are to

see the continued progress of the country, and if it is able to carry out half of what it promised on the hustings, I will be the first to congratulate it and to say in the well-known words of the poem, "You're a better man than I am Gunga Din."

MR. NALDER (Wagin) [4.32]: First let me also offer my congratulations to you, Sir. Although coming late in the Address-in-reply they are none the less sincere. Your long experience on both sides of the House over many years ably fits you for the task and from my observation already, I feel sure you will carry out your duties efficiently and impartially. I also congratulate the member for York on his elevation to the position of Chairman of Committees and feel sure that he also will carry out his duties to the best of his ability. Congratulations are also extended to the members of the various constituencies who have attained the rank of Ministers. I am sure they are aware of their responsibilities, a fact which is evidenced by the sincerity with which they are tackling their jobs. I wish them a long and prosperous term on the Treasury Bench.

I should like to pay a tribute to the sterling service rendered by my predecessor, Mr. Stubbs, who retired after the last session of Parliament. He ably represented Wagin in this House for a very long period and his work was very much appreciated, as is evidenced by the fact that for many years he was returned unopposed; and when he was opposed he won the election by a substantial majority. I wish him a long and happy term of retirement and I hope that the example of service he set as a member will be followed by myself as long as I remain in this House.

Having had no previous experience in Parliament and having never been in this House before, it was with a certain measure of expectancy that I observed the opening proceedings. I have listened intently to the various speeches and one thing that struck me very forcibly was that the Party now in opposition received a very forcible blow on the 15th March last, and that the members of that Party are still bleeding profusely from the incision made by that blow. Why so many new members on this side of the House should ally themselves with such a band of criminal gangsters who strove to gain office by fraudulent methods is really a matter of amazement to me! The Leader

of the Opposition said the other night that some of the new members could not expect to have very long Parliamentary lives. I am not one who predicts the future; but may I suggest that if members on the other side of the House continue to adopt the methods they have in the last few weeks, possibly some of them may not continue very long in this Chamber. Why not accept the voice of the people and give them some credit for their decision?

I would like to draw attention to matters affecting my electorate and possibly having some bearing on the welfare of the State. First I would touch on transport, which has received a certain amount of criticism; and I would refer mainly to the transport of livestock. Having been a producer, bred and born on the land and knowing some of the disabilities which the producer is up against, I consider that the speedy transport of stock to the metropolitan markets and the better transport of fat lambs to the various treatment works is a vital matter. There is no doubt that producers in this State annually lose thousands of pounds because of the inefficient method of transport, the lack of speedy delivery and the inadequate wagons that are used.

I have been informed that the Lake Grace spur line is one of those in the State that has shown a profit. If that is the case, is not the claim of settlers serviced by that rail for very much better transport justified? In recent months the passenger service has been considerably improved. The introduction of speedier traffic and also speedier delivery of mails and papers have been a boon very much appreciated by settlers. But the service provided in connection with the transport of stock is shocking. I would mention particularly the producers on the Hyden Branch. Although some of them do not exactly reside in my electorate they use the Lake Grace spur line for the transport of their stock. To get that stock to the Midland Junction market they begin the preceding week.

The stock are driven to the railway yards on Saturday morning, loaded, sent to Wagin and unloaded there. They stay at Wagin till the following Tuesday and are then re-loaded and sent to the metropolitan market; the sheep and cattle being sold on the Wednesday and the pigs on the Thursday. The actual distance travelled by rail is 330 miles. If it were possible to carry them by road—

and roads are in existence—the distance would be 170 miles. If the recent railway strike did nothing else, it indicated that stock could be transported by road efficiently and expeditiously, to the advantage of the producer. During that hold-up a road transport unit called at a farm east of Wagin and loaded 85 wethers, left the farm at 7.30 on the Wednesday morning and was at Midland Junction for the market at 12.30.

While on the subject of transport of stock, I would refer to the trucks that are used—"S" wagons—which I consider amongst the worst that are running on our railway system. Into one of these vans 80 sheep are loaded without any compartment to divide them, and it will be realised that with the constant swaying and swerving of the train when in motion, the animals are forced from one end to the other. I have here an extract from a paper dated the 7th August, 1947, which will give some idea of the condition in which some of the stock arrive at their destination. It is as follows:—

Suckers sold were again in very good order and ranged from medium to good weights but there was a fair percentage which arrived off the trucks in a very dirty condition.

Who stands that loss? It is the producer. It takes him many years to build up his flock. He plans a long time in advance and breeds his lambs for export. Then, because of faulty transport, his animals are sold on the market at a price very much below that which is ruling for the best product. I know of at least one dealer at the Midland Junction saleyards who boasts about the money he makes on downers. These are sheep that have been down in the truck through faulty transport.

Some years ago I visited Victoria and was very much impressed by the care exercised in the planning and building of wagons used for the transport of sheep. Every endeavour was made to have them suitably constructed so that the animals could arrive at their destination in the best possible condition. Already this session much has been said by a number of speakers about the value of primary production of this State. It is true that primary production is a fundamental asset. I have had opportunity of travelling over many parts of the State and would say that the days of our pioneers are not past. In our outback areas we have men and women now equal to any that

blazed the trail in the early days. They are contributing in large measure to the development of our back country. I refer particularly to those residing in the Lakes district. They are faced with many hardships, years of drought, shortage of water, the ravages of wild dogs, the distance they are from rail heads and the cost of transporting their goods, but even those disabilities have not dampened their ardour to carry on and make a success of their work.

I will give an instance of the high costs with which such people are faced. A fortnight ago a farmer at Lake Camm got some fencing material for a new paddock. The freight to the rail head at Newdegate was £3 16s. 8d., but the road cartage from there to his farm cost £7 15s. I would ask the Minister for Transport seriously to consider granting a through rate. By that I mean an inclusive freight from Perth to the destination at Lake Camm. Years ago, when these people set out into the vast back country they were promised a railway which has never been built. I doubt the advisability of building it now, as I think modern road transport would serve that area better.

I will now draw attention to the extortionate commission charged on the sale of bacon pigs—pigs bought by the bacon firms. These pigs take the producer a considerable time to prepare for market. One farmer who had 16 bacon pigs found, on taking them to market, that on the fall of the hammer he had to hand over the price of one pig to the agents to cover the commission charge. At a sale last week in a country district 620 bacon pigs were offered for sale. The price averaged approximately £8 per head, and £250 of the money realised was paid in commission charges. That equalled the price of 33 pigs. I think that is a gross injustice and I hope that the Act controlling the percentages charged on the sale of bacon pigs will shortly be reviewed.

I will deal next with education, as the position of our rural children is deplorable, especially in the more sparsely settled areas. Although the system of consolidation of schools being carried out by the department, where children are transported by bus to central schools, is sound, the opportunities afforded to those children, especially in the sphere of secondary education, are poor. It is to be hoped that this Government will

seriously consider setting up more high schools and area schools in country districts, so that the children may have opportunities equal to those of their city cousins. I wish to point out the urgent need for constant medical and dental care of our children. I do not know how many doctors are attached to the Education Department in Western Australia, but I know there are four dentists, and I think that number is totally inadequate. They can touch only a very small portion of the care required by the children in this great State.

In New Zealand there are 400 dentists and dental nurses who attend to the requirements of school children and adolescents up to the age of 19 years. In Great Britain, the Education Act of 1944 makes provision for future dental treatment of all school children. If we are to advance, as a country, we must care for the health of our children, so that the opportunities they may have to gain knowledge will not be impaired by ill-health brought about by our neglect.

I come now to the supervision allowance which, since the new Minister has taken over, has been extended to the South-West Land Division. There is a provision in that Act to which I take the strongest exception. I hope it will be amended as soon as possible. If a mother supervises the education of her children, the allowance is paid only if she employs somebody to take her place in the house. I have a number of people in my electorate who come into that category. There is one lady who resides 29 miles from the nearest rail-head, town or school. She has been supervising the education of her children for six years, but because she is not in a position to employ a domestic she cannot receive the allowance. Members know the difficulty of getting domestic help in the city, and so they must realise how much greater the difficulty is for someone living 200 miles from Perth and almost 30 miles from a rail-head. In matters such as this I think the Government should show greater understanding, and that in a case such as I have mentioned financial assistance should be given. That is only one small way in which the Government could render a real service to the people who are pioneering and populating our back country.

I come next to the country hospitals. Much publicity has recently been given to the shortage of nurses, which has affected

one of the hospitals in the Wagin electorate. I refer to the Lake Grace hospital, which, owing to the shortage of nurses, has been closed down. Cases of sickness in that district have now to be transported to Wagin. A week or two ago a little girl living in Ravensthorpe injured her leg. There was a hospital there, but it had been closed. The hospital at Lake Grace was not open and the child had therefore to be taken to Wagin, a distance of over 200 miles, for treatment. From my observations I believe that immediately a new hospital is built there, with housing for the staff in close proximity to the hospital, the position will be relieved. I am informed that the previous Government had given the construction at the Lake Grace hospital number one priority, and I hope the present Government will carry out that project as soon as possible.

Another matter to which I would draw attention is that of equipment and plant for country hospitals. In 1929 it was felt by the people of Wagin that some addition to the buildings and plant at the hospital was necessary. The Government agreed to this provided the townspeople and ratepayers found a third. This they did. Three years ago it was felt that a maternity ward was needed, and the people contributed to it on the same basis. That maternity wing was opened last year. The people of that district now feel that it is essential that an up-to-date x-ray plant be installed. They have gone as far as to contribute one-third of the cost of the necessary plant. The Minister for Health was approached, and last week I received from him a reply saying that he considered it was unnecessary to have a large x-ray plant attached to the Wagin hospital; a similar plant, he thought, would fill the need.

I would ask how much the people in the metropolitan area have contributed towards the cost of the Royal Perth Hospital or any other Government institution that has been erected in the city to care for the sick. I consider that gross injustice is being meted out to the country people. If they are prepared to help themselves, then I hope the Government will view the matter as one of importance. When the people in country towns and districts are prepared to help the Government build up an asset that will give them a sense of security, I think it is the duty of the Government to assist in every possible way. Finally, I would refer to a

number of statements made by members, pointing out what a great asset primary production is to this State. We all agree that this is so. Until our primary producers have a sense of security—and by this I mean until they receive a fair return over the cost of production—we as a State cannot advance. If we want to populate Western Australia and build it up and bring it more nearly into line with the other States, we must have happy, contented and prosperous primary industries.

I listened with much interest to the remarks by the member for Kalgoorlie about superphosphate. I am glad that point has been brought up because this country is crying out for superphosphate and still more superphosphate, and I do not think the Government could assist the primary producer more than by making superphosphate available at the cheapest possible rate. I thank members for the attentive hearing that has been accorded me, and trust that my stay in this House may be one upon which I shall be able to look back in after years with pleasure and, at the same time, I hope that my sojourn here will enable me to contribute in some small way towards assisting the people whom I have been called upon to represent.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison) [5.2]: I sincerely hope that members will pardon me for trespassing upon their valuable time so early in the session. I have a statement to make that ought to be pleasing to my listeners. I did intend to deal fairly fully with some subjects which I consider to be of vital importance to the State and upon which the people of the State, in my opinion, should be well informed, but the time at my disposal is so brief that I shall have to curtail my remarks and make only a few observations of a minor nature.

Now that we have had an opportunity to hear the initial speeches of several new members, we are in a better position to judge of their capacity and ability. Speaking as a member with a lengthy experience in this House, I believe those contributions indicate that the debating strength of the Chamber has not deteriorated by reason of the changes. In fact, the efforts of the new members were wonderfully good. While congratulating those members upon their maiden efforts, I regret that I cannot include the member for Geraldton in the

category. Although he bestowed a somewhat elegant bouquet upon me, I must sharply disagree with some of his observations.

The hon. member is an old Parliamentarian, not a new one. I could excuse a new member for speaking as he did, because I paid the price for similar folly. I have been shuttlecocked across the Chamber on probably more occasions than has any other member with the possible exception of the member for Boulder, and this is not the first or second time I have occupied a seat on the Opposition benches. So I say I can excuse a new member who lends a ready ear to a breath of political scandal uttered *ex parte*, and who uses it in the Chamber as being authentic for the purpose of vilifying or, at least, discounting the honesty of purpose of other members, or groups of members, without having first checked up on the accuracy of the statements. Such stories are whispered in the ears of each and every one of us from time to time.

I recall that, when new to this House, I was informed by a person that he had been wrongly treated by a Minister. In company with the accuser and in a state or more or less anger, because I believed the story of the supposed injustice told to me, I rushed to see the Minister. I want the new members to know that, on discussing the matter with the Minister, I discovered that the file disclosed an entirely different story. So I warn new members to be careful when making charges in this House unless they have first assured themselves of the facts.

Unfortunately, the member for Geraldton did not do that. I have known him for a long time, and for him to make a statement that was a positive and deliberate untruth was puzzling to me and difficult to understand. I do not feel disposed to accuse him of having intentionally made a deliberately false statement; yet it seems almost incredible that a public man should have been so mis-informed. During the course of his speech, he said that the trouble over the A.S.G. engines had been due to the then Government's having failed to give any consideration to the recommendations of the Royal Commissioner. The Royal Commissioner was appointed by the Labour Government to investigate the whole of the allegations made by the men

working these engines, and further evidence was obtained in other States in which similar engines were being operated. The Royal Commissioner took a long time to make his investigations and lodge his report, much longer, I think, than the Government of the day anticipated, but that was not the fault of the Government.

The accusation of the member for Geraldton last night was that the Government failed to take immediate action to give effect to the recommendations. That is a positive untruth. Within 24 hours of the release of the report, the Premier, through his Minister, had a copy of the report and recommendations forwarded to the Commissioner of Railways and to the secretary of the union, asking for their comments in writing. The union replied that it had no desire to comment in writing, but the Commissioner of Railways did so. Immediately the report was released, the Premier also made a statement, through the Press, to the effect that the Government intended to give full effect to the recommendations. Within 24 hours of that announcement having been published, the Premier was in communication with the Prime Minister. The Royal Commissioner had recommended that there should be a Commonwealth engineer to supervise the reconditioning of these engines, because they were Commonwealth engines.

No doubt the Royal Commissioner considered—I am speaking from memory—that the Commonwealth Government should foot the bill for the cost of the alterations to increase the safety of the engines when in traffic. Unfortunately for the State Government, the communication to the Prime Minister reached Canberra on the eve of the Federal elections. When no reply was forthcoming within a day or two, the Premier sent a reminder to the Prime Minister. Fearing undue delay in the appointment of an engineer by the Commonwealth, owing to the imminence of the Federal elections, the State Government—and this indicates its sincerity and desire to give effect to the report—communicated with the Premier of South Australia, Mr. Playford, and also with the Premier of New South Wales, Mr. McKell, pointing out the invidious position in which we stood, and asking whether they could oblige by supplying an engineer or the services of a com-

petent man capable of giving effect to the Royal Commissioner's report.

Do not forget that the Leader of the Opposition—the Premier of that day—did something which can be said to be not altogether correct. In his eager desire to obtain an engineer, he went outside the scope of the recommendation of the Royal Commissioner who had recommended a Federal appointee. Mr. Playford replied that he was unable to assist us in any way. Mr. McKell replied immediately saying that he was going into the possibility of supplying an engineer. Within two days—if my memory serves me right; the file will show—Mr. McKell replied that he thought he could oblige us. On the eve of the arrival of that communication, we received word from the Prime Minister that he had already agreed to the appointment of an engineer.

In face of those activities, how can it be said that the then Government was negligent in implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commissioner? The Government of the day was as eager and as anxious as anyone could possibly be to give effect to the report, as we knew how urgent and necessary it was to get these engines into traffic at the earliest possible moment. I tell the member for Geraldton, who is absent for the moment, that his accusation of wilful delay in implementing the Royal Commissioner's report was false in the extreme. I do not say he made the accusation deliberately. It seems difficult to me and puzzling why I should have to refer to this matter, as I have here a copy of the speeches made by the then Premier in this House on the subject in April and November, 1946. All members who were in the Chamber at the time will recall the fatal evening when the Premier made that statement to the House.

Another statement was made by the President of the Arbitration Court on the same subject. He pointed out clearly that the Government had done everything humanly possible to expedite the matter. Other correspondence on the subject was published by the Executive of the Labour movement, indicating where the fault, if any, lay. I regret the matter has been revived again. I would rather let it die. It has, however, again been given publicity by a member of Parliament who ought to have been vitally interested in the subject from its inception,

but he seemingly remained in ignorance of what was going on, or else lent a ready ear to someone with a disposition for breathing into willing ears some spice of political scandal. I desire to make an announcement. I do not think I can deal as fully as I would like with the subjects which I have in mind, but opportunities will present themselves later and I shall then take my time and deal with them in a way most suitable to my own peculiar method.

I was interested in the summing-up by some of the new members of the capacity and ability of the members of the new Government. Here I might sound a note of warning to the new members. I have had the pleasure of sitting behind several Governments and also the pleasure of sitting on the opposite side of the House at a time when several anti-Labour Governments were reigning. The new members should realise that all that glitters is not gold. A member sitting on the Opposition side of the House has no responsibilities whatever and it is easy for him to tell others who have the responsibility how to exercise it. I have found, too, that what is considered a virtue when members are on the Opposition benches is more or less criminal when they cross over the Chamber. So I say to the new members, be particularly careful about any eulogy. They should watch and wait, and if many of them are not sadly disillusioned within the short space of twelve months or so I shall be agreeably surprised.

Mr. Leslie: You have had the miseries ever since this session started.

Mr. MARSHALL: I see that already our Loan Vote has been cut by 25 per cent. Without money, it is most difficult for a Government to function. We have not to go far back in the history of the State to get a reminder of the power and the capacity of international financiers and the tragedy which they can cause to all the Governments of the world. I notice a change in the attitude of some members who are supporting the Government. Incidentally, one Independent—I think it was the chairman or the secretary of the Party—

Mr. Leslie: It must have been one or the other.

Mr. MARSHALL: —appealed to the Opposition to give members of the present Government time to show what they can do. I am not aware that the members of the

present Government, when soliciting the favourable support of the electors, made any stipulation about time to show what they could do.

The Minister for Education: Yes, they did.

The Minister for Works: Three years.

Mr. MARSHALL: They did not ask for a period of one, two, three or more years. As a matter of fact, their implication was that if the public wanted an immediate change from go-slow and sabotage methods the Government should be changed and the effect would immediately be seen.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: As a matter of fact, they claimed to be experts as charwomen in cleaning up cobwebs.

Mr. MARSHALL: That reminds me, what opportunity did the members of the present Government give to the Government that preceded them? What mercy was shown to it by the present Minister for Transport, whom I shall not forget before this session is out.

The Minister for Railways: I would not advise you to go too far with it.

The Minister for Works: He would not mind it a bit.

Mr. MARSHALL: I feel as though he has been threatened by the Commissioner of Railways.

The Minister for Railways: Do you? Then you are wrong.

The Minister for Lands: Are you speaking from experience?

Mr. MARSHALL: No, from what I have observed in the Press. When one gets a rap over the knuckles and immediately apologises and makes amends for what one said at Bunbury the matter becomes plain. I shall refer to those points a little later. The subtle way in which the members of the present Government deliberately tried to impress upon the community that the Government which preceded them had been in office for a period of 14 years is wrong. The Government that preceded the present Government was in office for a period of 19 months. What was its experience? When it took over early in August, 1945, war, or at least actual shooting, ceased. As a matter of fact, it ceased on the 15th August. Has war actually ceased? There is war all over the world today, although arms and

ammunition are not yet employed. This is the new world order!

Let me remind members of the war propaganda during World War II. We were not deceived by it. We were not deceived even by the Atlantic Charter. If the members who raised this matter have mentality sufficient to enable them to go as far back as World War I, they will remember that the platform was kicked from under Labour speakers. Senator Don Cameron of Victoria had to run from the Esplanade to the Weld Club to avoid a vicious attack upon him in a country where we are supposed to enjoy free speech. He had tried to tell the people the actual truth. Everything that he and the late Edward McCallum and other people had to say on the Labour platform materialised after the war stopped. Every one of their prognostications was realised. We were not deceived in the last war. We knew the tactics too well to be deceived. With all our political differences, I think it can be said that on only rare occasions have we stooped to personalities. Where it has happened the majority of members of this Chamber have resented it, and rightly so.

Much has been said about the propaganda used during the last elections, both State and Commonwealth. Propaganda on the eve of an election might be referred to as fair political criticism. It is usually put up in such a way that it will win public confidence without stooping to personalities. Every public man must be prepared for public criticism; it is part of his life. Such criticism is good and wholesome because it keeps the public men on their toes. They become watchful of their every action. They know, when they are being criticised, that the public eye is upon them. However, there is a sharp line of demarcation between criticism and abuse.

The Minister for Education: "Them's my sentiments!"

Mr. MARSHALL: When abuse is carried to the extent that the abuser would endeavour, by virtue of innuendoes, to rob a public man of his good name, then it has got beyond what can be tolerated. It is little wonder that the public has some doubt about the honesty of public men when propaganda challenges their probity and refers to them as intriguers and deceivers. It has

then got to the stage where the individual should be called to account. I have figured in many political arguments, and I have witnessed quite a few. One of my friends scabbed on me on one occasion and got into a brawl without me, and I resented it.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You were a bit lighter then than you are now.

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes. But never has any member of this Chamber stooped to such depth of degradation as to rob some member here of his good name. Now we look over yonder and see the accuser and the accused. The guarantee against deception and intrigue is there.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Which one?

Mr. MARSHALL: Right over there. That is where those who are accused of intrigue and deception sit. It is strange to relate, but a libellous statement was made on the public platform and published in the Press.

The Chief Secretary: What is it? We have not heard it yet.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Do not get excited.

Mr. MARSHALL: It was said of the Liberal Party and the Country and Democratic League. Their interests are bound up in intrigue and deception. I have a copy of the publication here, but it is not essential. A photo of the individual is there as a guarantee against these things. There was to be no more deception, no more intrigue because that particular candidate was a guarantee against those things which, apparently, are inherent in party politics. But we find a change. Seemingly this is a case of Parliament at any price. No matter what the sacrifice, he will mix with intriguers and deceivers to get into Parliament.

I would like to know what the electors of Middle Swan have to say about this affiliation. It would be interesting to know what they think of it, now that the public life of this country is being controlled by men who will belong to party politics, and party politics is based on intrigue and deception. These individuals are kept in their responsible positions by the accuser who has now decided to absorb intrigue and deception for the sake of Parliamentary honours. I do not mind it and, if members have no regard for their good name, and are prepared to put up with this, then that is all right. But, Mr. Speaker, as you cannot address the House, I will speak for

you, and I will go so far as to speak for the primary producers who are members of the Country and Democratic League and who are resident in the Middle Swan electorate. I will also speak for the members of the Liberal Party who reside in that electorate.

Mr. Bovell: They have spoken.

Mr. MARSHALL: They spoke without being conscious of what was happening. It has not really struck home yet. Members here who belong to the Country and Democratic League should know of this because it is not an accusation simply against members of Parliament, but against the Party, and every member of it. Well, there are in my electorate members of the Country and Democratic League and of the Liberal Party. Those that I know are honourable men, though they may not be predisposed towards my politics. But I take strong exception to their being accused of carrying on intrigue and deception. But we have the picture here now of the accuser and the accused. They sit in beauty side by side; such is politics!

The Minister for Lands: You have all the beauty on your bench.

Mr. MARSHALL: All that I want now is for the public Press to paint that picture for the electors of Middle Swan and those of the rest of the State, with or without cobwebs!

Mr. Grayden: Now tell us how you got the name of "Lavender Bill." That would be much more interesting!

On motion by Mr. Graham, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.41 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 26th August, 1947.

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