

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 24th August, 1943.

Address-in-reply, fifth day PAGE 93

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fifth Day.

Debate resumed from the 12th August.

HON. H. S. W. PARKER (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.35]: I am very pleased indeed that we have resumed the former hours of sitting in this Chamber. That we are able to revert to our normal practice certainly indicates that there has been a great advance in the defence position of our country and our Empire. I trust that there will be an improvement in other directions throughout the land. Particularly do I wish to refer to the conditions that obtain under the provisions of the Civil Defence (Emergency Powers) Act. In various parts of the city we have a number of unsightly bunds and what appear to me to be most dangerous erections in the shape of timber used to close up windows. In many instances in the city block the windows are covered with 3-ply. In some places these structures are so built that there is a small opening which would provide a first-class draught for any fire that might occur.

Should there be a serious outbreak of fire in the central portion of Perth, it seems to me that the whole block would go. One would think that the erections had been constructed for that very purpose. I trust that the whole of the air raid precautions regulations will be completely revised in accordance with the information that has come to us through those in a position to know the existing state of affairs. We are aware that Australia is now out of danger except for possible nuisance raids, but I think we can take it that there will be no nuisance raids in this portion of the State because it is too well protected. It is not likely that the enemy will risk coming down to Fremantle when he knows what the position is. Nuisance raids may take place elsewhere on the coast, but I do not think they will occur down here. I trust the Govern-

ment will do what it can to have the regulations revised and to build up the morale of the people by making the city a bit more cheerful and happy.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Surely the morale of the people is quite all right!

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Perhaps the morale of the people is all right through their having been promised something. Whether those promises will be fulfilled I do not know. But let us go further and do something more than promise. Let us remove all these unsightly structures from the streets and make the place a little more cheerful. It is curious that we should have these lighting restrictions and regulations, and windows boarded up, and yet be able to read in cabled messages that in London, which is alongside an enemy with a most powerful Air Force, Australian woollen goods are being advertised and displayed in the shop windows. Here we are many thousands of miles from the nearest enemy aerodrome and are not allowed to have lights in any windows, which must still be boarded up! Probably it will be said that it is in accordance with a gentlemen's agreement. It is a gentlemen's agreement brought about by the Minister in charge of the Act, and it may or may not be that his representative said, "If you do not do this, we shall take action under the Act." I do not know whether that is so or not, but it is time the Government gave a lead and said, "Remove all these unsightly obstructions, and let us get back to normal."

I now wish to refer to the matter of bus routes. I have mentioned this previously but I would like to do so again for the subject appears to me now to be more important than ever. We know there is a rubber shortage and that petrol must be conserved in every possible way. We are also aware that spare parts are becoming more and more difficult to obtain. It is extremely hard to procure new engines and yet, notwithstanding all these facts, no curtailment of non-essential bus services has been effected. Let me refer to some that I regard as such. Take the bus service from Perth to Fremantle! Already a railway exists to serve the requirements of the people in the areas traversed. It is common knowledge that, particularly in the afternoons, buses from Fremantle are overcrowded with naval personnel on leave. I agree that it is very nice

to provide such facilities for the men, but we must not lose sight of the fact that there are shortages of rubber, petrol and spare parts. To such an extent is this so that people who reside in outlying suburbs may soon be deprived of essential transport services because the buses now used will be worn out.

In such circumstances it should be regarded as essential for transport facilities generally to be fully conserved. I suggest that buses should be allowed to run only to outlying suburbs under conditions that will mean serving existing tramways or railways. I would be inclined to include trolley bus services as well because they are crowded at the peak periods at any rate, and I know difficulty would be experienced if an attempt were made to get the necessary plant to increase that form of transport. Then again we frequently see advertisements in the Press regarding special trips to Rockingham, Mandurah, Safety Bay and so on. I cordially agree that those centres must be served with necessary transport facilities, but is a special Sunday service essential? Are not such services merely for picnic purposes? I may be told that the people should be allowed to enjoy picnics, and I quite agree with that suggestion. On the other hand, are we able to afford such special trips in these days when those concerned are so hard put to it to obtain requirements essential for necessary suburban traffic? We find that the trips I refer to are not from Fremantle, which is the terminus of the railway, but from Perth, so that the service involves an additional 24 miles of running, which is a consideration in these days when we are urged to conserve petrol supplies. I trust the Government will seriously consider how best to conserve the continuity of essential transport facilities to the outer suburbs.

Again, that stupid restriction upon people boarding any bus that happens to run along a trolley bus or tram route still operates. I have travelled on the bus from Mosman Park through Nedlands at peak periods and have noticed that several seats were available in the bus, yet hundreds of people have been left standing on the roadside waiting for a trolley bus. Surely during war-time we could forget such restrictions and allow the people to travel by bus when seats are available. On very many occasions people could have obtained seats on the bus by which I have travelled but were not per-

mitted to do so; yet the next succeeding trolley bus had passed them fully loaded and the people had to wait for an extended period until some trolley bus came along on which could be crowded yet another "sardine," if I may put it that way. I know more about the Mosman Park service than about the others and on that service no one is permitted to ride unless travelling to Mosman Park or thereabouts. The first stop is about a quarter of a mile from Stirling Highway and is in or near Peppermint Grove.

Those buses are nearly always as fully loaded as they can possibly be. So to speak, not another parcel could be squeezed in anywhere on the buses. Those vehicles are forced to go up Malcolm-street and to follow a circuitous course en route to Mosman Park. Seeing that there is the necessity to preserve rubber and petrol and in view of the difficulty in securing spare parts, why should those buses not be allowed to travel around the river thus journeying over the flat and avoiding hill climbing? Nothing has been done in that matter, and I suggest to the Government that a change should be effected. We may be told that it has no power over the Western Australian Transport Board. If it has no power over that authority, the Government could very easily secure it by asking the Commonwealth Government to vest it with the required power as has been done in many instances where the Premier has been granted authority to do certain things that, as I shall submit later, should have been done by Parliament itself. I regard this as a matter of great urgency.

Let members consider the position regarding the taxi services. From a report that appeared in "The West Australian," we find that boys risk their lives by rushing out on to the streets to hail taxis for American sailors who desire to go joy-riding. Apparently the boys make quite a lot of money that way. We know that the taxi-drivers are making a handsome living out of the joy-riding indulged in by our American visitors. I do not blame them for that; I wish them good luck. However, the Americans apparently monopolise the taxis, and can we afford to allow that to continue in view of the shortages I have mentioned and particularly the necessity to conserve petrol? I noticed a report in this morning's paper in which it was stated that in Sydney the authorities are considering

establishing a bureau to control the taxi services. I hope something of the sort will be done in Western Australia so that the taxis available will be used for essential requirements only.

Hon. G. B. Wood: That was promised here, but it was found that the Government was not able to do it.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: During the war period the State Government has had a comparatively easy time because the burden associated with the war effort has fallen mainly on the Commonwealth Government. What has the State Government done to assist people to secure good government of the people of Western Australia? Nothing! State Ministers cannot claim that they are over-worked because the Government has been able to lend one Minister to the Commonwealth in order that he may carry out certain duties. I do not say that that course should not have been followed but if the State Government can afford to make the services of one Minister available to the Commonwealth Government, it has apparently time on its hands. If not, why not appoint another Minister to do his job? We find that a very simple but very important matter is being entirely and absolutely neglected. For some time there has been a burning question as to the queueing up of passengers about to board buses in the Terrace. What has happened? One person has already been killed. I have myself seen several very close shaves. I have seen one woman knocked over. I know of two others who were actually knocked over. Still nothing is done. The Government, in reply to my questions on this subject, says it cannot do anything.

That seems an extraordinary position. If the Government cannot do anything, it is because it has no servants to do anything. The sooner the Government gets some improved service, the better. It appears, from the Minister's reply to my question, that one sergeant and four constables were detailed for duty at the trolley bus stop in St. George's-terrace during September, 1942, and that they attempted to queue up passengers for approximately four weeks. If that is so, those five men must have been four hopelessly incompetent constables and a hopelessly incompetent sergeant. How hopeless those men must be! We can draw our own conclusions as to the persons responsible for the fact that

people cannot be queued up for buses in St. George's-terrace, especially when we find at any suburban picture show where on every Saturday night there is a crowd, the people automatically queue up themselves, without any policemen. Without having the benefit of any police supervision, just before the tea rationing came in, when one went into a shop to get a lb. or half a lb. of tea, one had to be there before 10 in the morning, as otherwise the probabilities were that the shop would be right out of supplies before one's turn came to be served. In all these cases there was perfectly orderly queueing without any constables.

With all due respect, I do not believe the statement that our police are incompetent to queue up people. All the Government attempted to do was to queue passengers up for trolley buses. Look at all the other buses! As far as I can see, the Government does not care two straws about people unless they have paid money to join a union. If they are not members of a union, let them be killed! It does not matter. The position has become so bad that the Nedlands Road Board has felt compelled to publish an open letter containing a threat to the Government that the board will do something if the Government does not. Various deputations have waited on the Minister to try to get something done, but the Minister says he cannot do anything. I do not believe that. He can do something if he wants to. I will state this, that if something is not done within a very short space of time to remedy the present position, I will ask this House to do something. I will ask the House to appoint a Select Committee or to demand the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire why nothing has been done, and to ascertain who is at fault, who is the grossly incompetent person that cannot queue up a few people for buses and so save all this unpleasantness. One can go down to the locality and find young men knocking old women over. I have seen only one woman knocked over, but I have seen a vast deal of crowding and shoving and unpleasantness. There is not even a policeman present to stop drunken men coming along—not all service men either—men who are very unpleasant and troublesome when there are no police about.

We are told that an attempt was made to get the buses to unload in William-street but that the official reply was that this could not be done. Nevertheless, it is being

done now during the peak period, and a vast deal of trouble is being saved in consequence. But go along on a Saturday afternoon when there is any occasion whatever for the trolley buses to be used beyond the normal demand, and again we will find the situation most unpleasant because passengers are getting out and in at the same time, which makes the position very unsatisfactory. Perhaps I might offer a few suggestions for consideration by the Government. Why the trolley and other buses go right round in front of "The West Australian" office I do not know. Why cannot they turn at the bottom of William-street, and let the people get in there? I do not know. By that means all the congestion in the Terrace would be avoided. Why should the buses be in the Terrace? The people have to go right down to the railway station. If they want the bus, they can go down to the river front, which is a much more pleasant locality than the Terrace. They have the whole Esplanade for room if they require it. I venture to say that if the police asked the people to queue up, they would have the whole thing in order within a few days. I do sincerely trust that the Government will do something in that direction in the very near future, thus eliminating the most unsatisfactory and shocking state of affairs that exists now, which would be a disgrace to any city. I feel quite sure that the city authorities, if the Government would give them the necessary power, would do it very efficiently.

I am sorry that the Premier has acted as a delegate to Federal Ministers. Here are 73 pages of various regulations which the Premier has made, and as regards these regulations or orders this Parliament has no power at all. To my mind any law that our Premier promulgates should be subject to criticism and repeal, in the same way as regulations are—by this Parliament. But by the existing method the Premier can do anything he likes with the authority of the Commonwealth Minister—bring in any law, practically anything, under the guise of the National Security Act and the regulations under it. I am sorry the Premier has done this, because I think it is a matter that should be delegated by the Commonwealth Minister to a Commonwealth officer, leaving the responsibility entirely with the Commonwealth instead of allowing the State Premier to be used for matters of this sort. Take,

for instance, the liquor licenses! There is an argument as to who is responsible for the closing of hotels at 6 p.m. The Commonwealth authorities say, "We are not responsible." The Premier says, "I am not responsible." If the action had been taken by our Premier, as the Premier, we would have had some say in this House. But the Premier, by virtue of his delegated power from the Commonwealth, does things that should be carried out by the Chief Commonwealth Officer in Western Australia, or else by the Minister himself. Why should not the Federal Minister take the responsibility of doing it? But no! He passes the responsibility on to our Premier, who I trust will see the error of his ways. That may be only a vain hope, but I trust it will work out. Of course, it is very nice indeed for a Premier to bring down any laws that he wants and say, "I have to do this because the Commonwealth wants it." It is equally nice for the Commonwealth to be able to say, "We did not do it; it was done by the Premier." Certainly this is a matter which should be cleared up.

I see by the Press that there is a question of summer time being introduced again. I would like to have representations made pointing out how we are situated in this State from that aspect. In Perth we are at present approximately half-an-hour ahead of summer time. We have advanced our clocks; in fact, our clocks are always advanced—I think the exact advance is 20 minutes as our time is taken from the longitude of Coolgardie—whereas in Sydney the position is the reverse, so that when the time is advanced in Sydney one hour summertime, it makes their sun time as ours is today, because it is half an hour behind. It is the same in Brisbane. The time for Sydney is Melbourne time, so that when the time is advanced one hour, Sydney is the same as we are today. That is, we are 1½ hours behind. In a letter to the paper recently a woman complained of the difficulty of getting her husband's breakfast in the morning by electric light so that he might go to work. It seems to me that summertime is not required in Western Australia. Possibly the Government may see fit to make representations, and allow summertime for South Australia and the Eastern standard time, but to leave the Western Australian standard time as at present.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Would there not be some difficulty about that?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: There would be no difficulty. Sydney at one period had one time and Melbourne had another. There would be no difficulty about making an alteration. We know that at present there is a difference of two hours between Perth and Sydney. If the Sydney time were altered we would know that the difference was only an hour instead of two hours. We know that ordinarily the difference between Perth and London is eight hours, but when London is given another two hours summer-time we know that the difference is ten hours. There would be no difficulty about doing what I suggest.

There is one matter that has come before the public and to everybody it appears most unsatisfactory. Each member of the House will deplore the fact that sectarianism is arising in the community. It is just beginning to show its head. I am sure we shall all be most happy if that tendency is nipped in the bud. We know that whenever sectarianism enters our political life, everything becomes unpleasant for everyone. We must be tolerant towards other people's religions. All clerics, of whatever denomination, should be on a separate plane and entirely removed from party political considerations of any kind. They should not enter into politics in any circumstances, and in the interests of the community at large it is our duty to prevent them from doing so. As soon as a cleric, as such, interferes with politics he causes untold unhappiness not only amongst his own flock, but to other people who happen to be of a different religious persuasion. In that way they raise this horrible ogre of sectarianism. We find in the history of the world that the priesthood has been the downfall of empires and civilisations. If we read ancient Egyptian history we find that it was the priests of Am and Ra who got control, and as soon as they got control away went the whole of the Egyptian empire. In later years we find that in France and Spain the same trend of events occurred. The most striking example was that of the priesthood controlling Russia and bringing about revolution. Whether that revolution was for good or ill does not matter; it was brought about by the priesthood of that country.

Priests and politics will not mix. I do not think that those clerics who are entering

into politics appreciate what they are doing. It is profound ignorance of politics which has caused them to interfere. If a cleric is really genuine, is teaching "goodwill to all men," "loving one another," and "doing unto all men as I would they should do unto me," he cannot possibly enter into the hurly-burly of politics. It is regrettable that party politics do not tend to assist Christian thought in that respect; unfortunately that is so. When the clerics have done their job and taught us the three principles I have mentioned, we will not have any party politics, and we shall all be as one.

Hon. G. B. Wood: You had a pastor in your province a communist. What would you do with him?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I am endeavouring to show my abhorrence of any cleric who enters into party politics of whatever kind. I suggest that any true cleric should not look for his reward on earth, but later. I have always been taught that that was the Christian religion. We find now people arising who call themselves clerics and look for their reward in self-advertisement and their own aggrandisement in this life. My point of view is that you cannot leave the pulpit for the soap box, and you cannot turn the pulpit into a soap box. You must have either one or the other; you cannot have it both ways.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: One man has been doing that.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I am afraid there are more than one, but I have no wish to particularise. I am speaking only generally.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Many have done that in a veiled way.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I hope that those who have done it in either a veiled or an open way will appreciate my attitude. I believe I am expressing the view of every member of the House. I am not a churchman, but I would be indignant if anyone told me I was not a Christian. The framers of our Constitution fully appreciated that if clerics were to enter politics it would be the end of the country. For that reason they provided that no minister of religion should be allowed to become a member of either House of Parliament. That was a very good thing. There is no doubt that if clerics did enter into politics it would be the beginning of the end for this country and for the Empire. If they continue to do their

duty—they have an excellent field in which to operate and they have a tremendous amount of work to do—namely, to educate the people to love one another and to do unto all men as they would they should do unto them, then I think they can safely leave the rest of the government of the country to those who like to take part in politics. I hope that clerics for the future will stand entirely clear of all political matters.

On motion by Hon. E. H. H. Hall, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.10 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 24th August, 1913.

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

ELECTORAL—SWEARING-IN OF MEMBER.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received the return of a writ for the vacancy in the East Perth electorate caused by the resignation of Thomas John Hughes, showing that Herbert Ernst Graham has been duly elected. I am prepared to swear-in the hon. member.

Mr. Graham took and subscribed the oath and signed the roll.

QUESTIONS (3).

FISH SUPPLIES AND PRICES.

As to Perth Herring, etc.

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for the North-West: 1, Can he now satisfactorily answer my question asked on the 3rd March, 1943, regarding the minimum length and age of Perth herring when it

first spawns and the weights at the lengths then specified? 2, Is it not a fact (a) That the increased production desired as stated by the Chief Inspector of Fisheries on the 29th July, 1943, if procured from the southern and western coastal rivers and estuaries south of Perth, will prejudice the future supplies from those sources? (b) That it will cause further wholesale depletion of mature fish or those able to reproduce their species? (c) That these waters, or some of them, are already seriously depleted? 3, Does he consider that the existing wholesale prices of fish are exorbitant and are inducing the excessive exploitation of these waters, including closed waters, irrespective of the additional exploitation proposed for canning purposes? 4, Is he prepared to take immediate action to have the wholesale prices of fish in Western Australia controlled and, if so, does he consider the prices ruling, say, in December, 1941, would be fair? 5, Does he consider it desirable to close to all netting additional coastal and estuary waters so as to permit the free ingress of mature fish to the southern rivers and estuaries this coming spring, say, between the 1st October and the 30th November, 1943? 6, If not, does he not consider that there will be a further depletion of local fish supplies for food for the immediate benefit and profit of a few? 7, Will he take steps to resist further Federal control of local fishing and fish products and, if not, why not?

The MINISTER replied: 1, In view of the value of Perth herring as a canning proposition, the investigation of its life-history is now being undertaken by officers of the local branch of the Division of Fisheries of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research. This investigation is being placed at the head of the list of importance, and it is hoped that the Commonwealth officers will at an early date be able to throw light on this important question. 2, (a) No. (b) No. (c) No. 3, The wholesale prices of fish are those secured at auction, and are regulated purely in accordance with supply and demand. There is no excessive exploitation of our waters, nor is there likely to be while the numbers of fishermen remaining in the industry continue at their present low level. 4, Action in this direction is already contemplated by the Commonwealth Prices Commissioner. 5, No. 6, No. 7, Control measures instituted