

what I say. It would not be in the nature of their profession for them to agree with one another.

Hon. N. Keenan: We all agree!

Mr. WITHERS: I read with some interest the result of the deliberations of five of the most eminent judges in Australia concerning the question of uniform taxation. The people of Australia wanted a constitutional point solved. The member for East Perth could have said what the Constitution of Australia establishes, but it would have been said of him, "What does he know about it? He is only a common lawyer." The member for Nedlands could have given a pronouncement and he is a K.C. What happened was that five eminent judges were chosen to decide the point. There were three for and two against. Under what is known as democratic rule the matter was decided by the majority, but two men who are just as learned as the three that constituted the majority had a different interpretation from theirs. Nevertheless, a thing is either right or wrong, and if the point taken was correct the whole five should have been in agreement. That is where majority rule carries us. It is possible for the third man who created the majority in favour of the Commonwealth Government's viewpoint on this question to have been biased in favour of or in opposition to the principle involved. I do not wish to detain the House any longer because if I did so I might say something that some members might not like. Members will realise the difficulty I have had in doing justice to the Speech, though in preparing my notes I was assisted by the courtesy extended to me by the Acting-Premier.

MR. TONKIN (North-East Fremantle): I formally second the motion.

On motion by Hon. C. G. Latham, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2.15 p.m. on Tuesday, the 4th August.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 4.25 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 4th August, 1942.

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

QUESTION—AGRICULTURE, SUPERPHOSPHATE.

Hon. G. B. WOOD asked the Chief Secretary: 1, What was the quantity of superphosphate purchased through the Agricultural Bank by farmers last season? 2, What was the amount of commission, if any, gained by the bank on the transaction? 3, What was the ultimate destination of the commission so received?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, 7,983 tons. 2, Superphosphate supplied to settlers at trade cash price, the distributors including the Agricultural Bank receiving trade commission of 2s. per ton. 3, Set off against overhead costs.

SITTING DAYS AND HOURS.

Standing Order Suspension.

On motion by the Chief Secretary resolved:—

That so much of Standing Order No. 48 be suspended as to enable the Council to meet for the despatch of business on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday in each week at the hour of 2.15 in the afternoon.

MOTION—CONDOLENCE.

The late Hon. J. M. Macfarlane, M.L.C.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY [2.26]: It is with deep regret that I rise to move the following motion:—

That this House desires to place on record its sincere appreciation of the public services rendered to this State by the late Hon. J. M. Macfarlane who, at the time of his death, was a member for the Metropolitan-Suburban Province, and expresses its deep sympathy with the members of his family in the irreparable loss they have sustained by his decease; and that the President be requested to forward the foregoing resolution to the members of his family.

Mr. Macfarlane had a lengthy and varied career in the public and commercial life of this State. He took a pride in civic matters

and was at one time a member of the Perth City Council. He was very closely associated with the milk and butter industry, and was always actively engaged in that particular direction. In going back over the years of the development of that industry one will find a regular mention of the name of Macfarlane. In 1910 he was a member of the Food Standards Committee set up under the Pure Foods Act. After being chairman of the Western Australian Committee of the Australian Dairy Council, he became the chairman of this State's Pasture Improvement Committee of the Australian Dairy Produce Board, retiring from that position in 1940. In the business community Mr. Macfarlane was a well-known figure. He founded the firm of Macfarlane & Co., Ltd., which still carries on under his name.

In 1922 Mr. Macfarlane entered the Legislative Council as a member for the Metropolitan Province. In 1928 he failed to gain re-election, but in 1930 he was successful in winning a Metropolitan-Suburban Province seat, which he held until his death. Notwithstanding his active association with the political, municipal and commercial affairs of this State, our late colleague also found time to interest himself in patriotic and social welfare organisations. He was an executive official of the War Patriotic Fund set up during the 1914-18 war, and at the time of his death filled the position of chairman of the executive of the Western Australian War Patriotic Fund for Soldiers' Dependents. He was a valued member of the Royal Life Saving Society and a former president of the Royal Agricultural Society.

So it can be said that Mr. Macfarlane has left behind a record of public service which will remain a credit to his memory. That record should be a matter of great pride to his bereaved family. During the years he was a member of this Chamber he was not a frequent speaker, only entering into debates on subjects of which he had a full knowledge. His remarks then were informative, having as a background a field of practical experience. It has been my privilege to be associated with him in many ways, and although we differed in our political views, I must pay tribute to the valuable services he rendered to the State in many capacities. He lived a full and active life, even unto his death. To

those he left behind, I trust that memories of his long and useful service to the community will be some consolation for his passing.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER (Metropolitan-Suburban): I join with the Chief Secretary in his remarks and endorse all he has said. Mr. Macfarlane, as a colleague, was extraordinarily good to me personally. He was well and popularly known throughout the province, and after I became a colleague, he assisted me not only inside but also outside the House. He was a man who possessed a wonderful fund of information and at all times made available to me any details I desired from him. Whenever he spoke, it was on matters with which he was fully conversant. He was a particularly valuable member in consequence of the information he was able to give on questions affecting the dairying and allied industries. Mr. Macfarlane's passing will be a great loss to this House and to his province. He was a man of great energy. There was no part of the province that he did not regularly visit, and when meetings were held at places difficult of access, one could always rest assured that he would be there, often accompanied by his wife. It was a pleasure to be present with him at various gatherings and entertainments; he was always so happy and cheerful. I suppose there are few members who enjoyed Parliamentary life so much as did our late lamented friend.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT (Metropolitan-Suburban): I wish to associate myself closely with the motion of condolence with the next-of-kin of my late colleague. Mr. Macfarlane will be missed by every member of this Chamber but, I think, more particularly by his two colleagues, Mr. Parker and myself. As Mr. Parker has said, Mr. Macfarlane was a great friend to us, a very helpful type of Parliamentarian, ever-ready to assist his fellow-representatives of the province. He closely identified himself with every movement for the social betterment of the people of his province, and possibly moved amongst his electors much more than does the average Parliamentarian. He was favourably known, favourably thought of and favourably spoken of by thousands of his electors, regardless of their or his own political views. It is with great regret that I speak on the motion.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY (East): I feel that we have lost an able advocate and helper, particularly in connection with the agricultural and allied industries of this State. I attended many agricultural shows in company with our late member, and the number of people who eagerly looked forward to the kindly advice he was always so ready to give from his own experience was indeed remarkable. He was particularly helpful in those centres where dairying holds sway. In a wider sphere he gave encouragement to every centre that he visited. He was particularly sought after for judging at shows, and whenever he had any spare time he readily made himself available for that purpose. His advice and assistance encouraged to carry on a great many who felt that things were not going too happily, and his advice and help carried many of them through to success. I feel that we have lost an esteemed member of this Chamber and I therefore wish to identify myself with the motion.

THE PRESIDENT: In putting the motion, I merely wish to add that our late colleague had inherited from his father a spirit of enterprise and pioneering. At the time of the gold discovery in California, his father left his homeland, went to California and lived there for some time. A few years after goldmining in California commenced in 1849, the gold discoveries of Ballarat and Bendigo attracted the attention of the whole world, and our late colleague's father was among those who left the goldfields of California for the goldfields of Australia. It was therefore but natural that Mr. Macfarlane, as a young man, should have acted somewhat similarly when the goldfields of Western Australia broke out and Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie began to be known. Mr. Macfarlane, just as his father left his homeland for the goldfields of California and later on left California for Australia, left the Eastern States and was among those who took part in the rush to the goldfields of this State. Throughout his whole life that spirit of enterprise and pioneering which had characterised his father also distinguished Mr. Macfarlane, who in his commercial undertakings, while endeavouring to advance his own fortune, also did great service for Western Australia and was a most useful citizen.

Question passed; members standing.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Second Day.

Debate resumed from the 30th July.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER (Metropolitan-Suburban) [2.35]: I would like to commence my remarks by welcoming our two newly-elected members. I feel sure they will prove to be of great assistance to us and to the provinces they represent, and we shall have the advantage of their general outlook on affairs. It is sometimes good to have new blood here and I feel sure that our two new members will assist to make the debates even more interesting.

The Honorary Minister: But I hope not more lengthy than in the past.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I am pleased to see our friend Mr. Thomson back after his recent long illness. I trust he has recovered fully and will be able to assist us as he has always done in the past. I regret that the Premier has been ill and that Mr. Baxter is absent for the same reason, but I trust that before long we shall have them back amongst us. The loss of the Premier's services at the present time is rather serious and we therefore hope his recovery will be quick.

Several matters I desire to touch upon border on the Federal sphere. As regards the State, I desire to pay a compliment to the Premier and his colleagues on having balanced the Budget. That is no mean effort in these times, and however much opposed I may be to many of the measures brought forward by the Government, I feel bound to admit—as I think every fair-minded person will admit—that the Government has done an excellent job in balancing the Budget.

Hon. J. Cornell: What about the July deficit?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I am speaking of the past year. I may have something to say about the Government's current policy. One matter I desire it to take up is of grave importance, especially to future generations of Western Australia, indeed of Australia, and that is the prevalence of venereal disease. It is usually thought that that disease must not be mentioned. Because of that, there is so much secrecy about it; people do not like to discuss it or even talk about it, but it continues on its underground way. If more publicity were given by the Government to figures relating to the disease from

month to month, people would be warned and parents could point out the risks to their children. From time to time some mention is made of the subject in the Press; some authorities assert that the disease is not increasing, others say that it is. We are all aware that in times of war, where masses of men—soldiers and sailors—are congregated together, venereal disease does, and will, increase. Nothing will stop young people from being extremely human. We must remember that when men enlist in the Forces they lose that home contact they have in civil life. They are taught differently. A man joins the Army to kill. In peace-time that is the most deplorable thing we can imagine. These large bodies of men become fed up with the daily routine, and it is but natural they should then give vent to their feelings. The young women and middle-aged women are carried away by the uniforms, with the result that the morals of the people depreciate tremendously.

Unfortunately parents do not seem to have the control over their children that they used to exercise. There is no such thing today as girls going to dances with chaperons. The girls attend willy-nilly, as they like. They certainly seem to take care with respect to the birth of children, but do they take precautions with regard to venereal disease, which, whether it is ordinary gonorrhoea or syphilis, can be passed on to future generations? It may not be the actual individual who contracts it now that will suffer most. The suffering will come a generation or two later. Something should be done with a view to bringing the matter more forcibly before the people. I am sure the newspapers would be only too willing to publish properly written articles from authoritative persons pointing out the various pitfalls that are to be evaded. I know that the Health Department has issued a pamphlet, but I do not know to what extent it is distributed. The pamphlet is one that a person may receive but hide away in case he is discovered with it. A pamphlet should be issued that everyone could see and profit by. If parents were more fully conversant with the various phases of venereal disease, they would perhaps take greater care of their young people. A properly prepared pamphlet would undoubtedly frighten many people, and would perhaps, if not prevent the evil, certainly minimise its effects.

I have been surprised to find that so many schools have been closed. It is not my intention to reiterate the argument I advanced last session about evacuation. The remarks I made at that time have proved to be more or less correct, namely, that the danger of an invasion in these parts is remote. Many school children have been evacuated. I am not speaking of schools that have been taken over by the Army or Navy, but of others where the children have been moved to schools somewhere in the neighbourhood and where the children have been taught in shifts. That is very bad for the children. Parents complain that the youngsters who do not go to school in the morning get into mischief through having so much time on their hands, and that those who attend school in the afternoon also get into mischief because their parents cannot look after them in the morning.

In normal times children are at school when the parents are away. Now, unfortunately, children are at home when the parents are away. I hope the Minister for Education will look into this matter and see whether it is possible to revert to normal school hours for all children, and to reopen the closed schools. I see no objection to preparations being made for an invasion, although such an eventuality is very doubtful. In my opinion children should be sent back to their old schools and told to carry on. The lack of full educational facilities, and a similar lack in the up-bringing of small children are aspects that will affect our future generations. Only as a last resort should we interfere with the educational facilities afforded to our children.

It is not my intention to dwell too much upon the absurdity of the black-out and lighting restrictions. Apparently the authorities think they are necessary, notwithstanding the number of fatal accidents that are directly due to the restrictions. Unfortunately the authorities take no precautions to see that the black-out of buildings is carried into effect. If the regulations are worthwhile, it should be equally worthwhile to see that they are properly carried out. I do not think a black-out is necessary, but unfortunately the law provides for it. For my own part I have religiously complied with the law in that respect and have blacked-out my windows. When I walk along the street I see every third house, if not every other house, with lights pouring

from the windows. Where I live it is possible to see a big street-light blazing three miles across the water. Wherever one looks one can see lights. Apparently people do not realise that their lights are showing. They think their windows are blacked-out, and that is where the danger lies. I am going to assume that I was wrong when I said some time ago that a black-out was unnecessary.

If a black-out is necessary, let it be properly carried out. We know what steps have been taken with regard to the head-lamps of motor cars; but against that we have the blazing lights on the trams. The Rottnest lighthouse is blazing, as are also the lights in the Fremantle Harbour and the navigation lights. The other night I saw lights blazing from the large windows of a hotel that is situated on top of a hill. I have seen private houses where all the blinds were up and the lights were blazing out towards the sea. If it is necessary to kill people so that there may be a black-out, surely it is not asking the Government too much to appoint a few inspectors to warn the community before any prosecutions are launched. The majority of people do not realise they are committing an offence. Let inspectors go round and point out where windows are not sufficiently covered. If householders do not comply with the law they should then be vigorously prosecuted. Some members of the Police Force should be engaged as inspectors to undertake this task, and not voluntary inspectors associated with air-raid precautions.

I admit that air-raid wardens and others are doing a wonderful work. Unfortunately some people are found in any organisation who, if they are given a little authority, will overdo it and do not act tactfully. If we are to have a black-out, the authorities should insist upon its being made complete. The only way to bring that about is to appoint inspectors to see that the work is properly done. My own idea is that the black-out restrictions are ridiculous. We are not likely to be raided; but if that does happen, the best way to ensure a complete black-out is for the lights to be turned off at the mains. There would then be no light anywhere. If I am wrong in my assumption, and it is possible for a raid to occur, it cannot last long, and the lights need only be out for a little while. Plenty of warning will be given, and vari-

ous instruments are available so that it may be given in good time. The Army and the Naval authorities do not seem to require these regulations, but they are wanted by the Civil Defence Council. If inspectors were appointed, as I suggest, it would probably be found that not one house in five was properly blacked out.

I was pleased to hear the suggestion that the number of copies of "Hansard" should be reduced. I for one would be willing to forego the bound volume that is supplied at the end of each session. We know we can always get a copy within the precincts of Parliament if we want one. Many members must feel as I do. "Hansard" takes up a lot of room on one's shelves and one seldom has to look at it.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Volumes of "Hansard" might be of some use on top of an air-raid shelter.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: If possible I should like to move that the printing of the bound volume of "Hansard" be discontinued, but the present is not the appropriate time to take such a step. I hope, however, the issue of "Hansard" as a bound volume will be discontinued.

I am sorry the Premier has consented to be the authority under the National Security Regulations. That seems to me to be wrong. The Premier is the servant of the State Parliament. It is wrong that he should bring down regulations as a servant of the Commonwealth Parliament, and so preclude members of this Parliament from having any say in those which he promulgates. I trust that State Ministers will not act as agents under the National Security Act. It is not right that they should do so. It takes them away from the Parliament of Western Australia, and it is to this Parliament that they are usually responsible.

I shall now draw attention to what is possibly a Federal matter, but it is necessary that it should be given some publicity. I noticed in the "West Australian" yesterday a statement from Canberra dated the 31st July, containing the following:—

The Minister for the Army (Mr. Forde) has received complaints from members of Parliament and others that some commanding officers are endeavouring to coerce members of the Citizen Military Force (militia) to join the A.I.F. Today he made it clear that transfers from the C.M.F. to the A.I.F. must be on a voluntary basis and that the Government would not tolerate coercion . . .

Mr. Forde added that the general routine order issued some time ago by Army Headquarters to Army units and dealing with the transfers had contained the following: "The greatest care must be exercised to ensure that there can be no question of coercion in obtaining volunteers."

That is quite right. We do not want to endanger the soldier who is prepared to fight anywhere for his country by forcing people when they say, "We are only going to fight under pains and penalties to go overseas, where there is no likelihood of a fight taking place." Those people should not be coerced. Every penny that is taken from the community by way of taxation, whether governmental or other taxation, reduces the standard of living. We cannot keep up the standard of living if money is taken from the people. If it is desired to keep up the standard of living it is essential that the wage-earner should retain as much of his wages as possible. That is a phase with which the Commonwealth Government does not seem to be in agreement to the extent that it agrees with the principle indicated in the extract I have already read, which intimates to the public that the Federal Government absolutely and entirely opposes any suggestion of coercion when the object is the benefit of the country; but in another direction it does not object when the coercion is for the benefit of the unions. I have already indicated how it disapproves of coercion when it comes to volunteering for service in the A.I.F.; and now I propose to demonstrate how the Federal Government is prepared to apply coercion to temporary clerks in the Commonwealth Public Service and in other branches of Federal employment, for the benefit of the unions.

I take it the Government's action can only be for the benefit of the unions because any Government that employs temporary clerks should be an ideal employer. Clerks are employed temporarily under conditions existing at the time and those conditions are prescribed by the Government. The present Commonwealth Government has set down certain conditions. Temporary clerks have been allowed certain rights by way of appeal and so on, but nevertheless the Government has decreed that those privileges should apply to temporary clerks only if they join the Temporary Clerks Union or some other appropriate union. The Commonwealth Government says to these employees: "You should not enjoy those privileges unless you join

a union. If you do not do so, you will not derive any benefits at all from these provisions nor will you receive any increase in your rates of pay. You must join a union."

I am informed that a member of the Temporary Clerks' Union must give six months or three months notice—I am not sure which; that point is immaterial for the purposes of my argument—if he desires to sever his connection with the organisation. He must pay his union dues during that period. A temporary clerk can be dismissed at a day's notice but nevertheless if he is a member of the union he must continue paying his dues during the period that must elapse before his resignation takes effect. I shall place before the House particulars of an extraordinary circular which was issued over the signature of Mr. W. T. Ross who presumably is the secretary of the Public Service Board, Canberra, on the 19th May, 1942. The circular reads as follows:—

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

G. 19/314. P.S.B. Circular No. 1942/5.

Memorandum to all departments:

Restriction of benefits of new Arbitration Determinations to members of relative organisations, etc.

I am directed to inform you that a direction in the following terms has been given by the Government:—

1. The Government desires, as a matter of policy, that the provisions of any determination already made by the Public Service Arbitrator but which is not yet in force, or of any determination that may be made subsequent to the 19th May, 1942, should be applied only to returned soldiers and to members of an organisation within the meaning of the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act.

2. Consequent on this direction the Board has varied the determination made under Public Service Regulation 74B, and the following conditions are to be applied in future:—

- (1) Determinations of the Public Service Arbitrator already made but not actually in force, and all future determinations, will apply only to members of organisations and returned soldiers.
- (2) Determination provisions being applied at the date of the Government's direction (19/5/42) will continue to apply to all officers and employees, whether members of organisations or not, until there is a new determination which is relevant; any such determination will be applicable only to members and returned soldiers (vide (1) above); others will remain subject to present conditions until they join an organisation, or until otherwise determined.

- (3) A new appointee—returned soldier or member of an organisation—will receive whatever determination benefits are applicable.
- (4) A new appointee—non-returned soldier and non-member—will be subject to the conditions in operation in relation to his position on 19/5/42, but on becoming a member of an organisation will receive the benefits of any determination brought into operation after 19/5/42.
- (5) Officers transferred or promoted from positions subject to one determination to positions covered by a different determination will be treated similarly to new appointees, vide (3) and (4).

3. All determinations of the Public Service Arbitrator subsequent to No. 12 of 1942 will come into force after 19th May, 1942. It should be noted, therefore, that the provisions of the following determinations in respect of which advices have already been issued by the Board will apply only to members of organisations registered under the Conciliation and Arbitration Act and to returned soldiers:—

The determinations are mentioned, these being Nos. 13, 14, 18, 19 and 20 of 1942 affecting the organisations concerned and subjects as follows:—

C.P.S. Clerical Association—Overtime, minimum rate.

C.P.C. Artisans' Association—Wartime allowances.

Amalgamated Postal Workers' Union Federated Public Service Assistants' Association—Rates of pay, assistants.

C.P.S. Artisans' Association—Overtime, employees over £462.

Amalgamated Postal Workers' Union—Line staffs, rates of pay.

The circular continues—

Determinations Nos. 15, 16, 17, 21 and 22 apply to officers and employees not under the Commonwealth Public Service Act.

Non-members of organisations occupying positions covered by the Arbitration determinations mentioned above who are not returned soldiers are ineligible for the benefits of those determinations unless and until they become members; they will until further notice remain subject to all the conditions at present in operation in regard to relative rates of pay and conditions of employment, e.g., linemen who are non-members and are not returned soldiers will continue to receive their present rates of pay, with increments as at present provided, but will not be paid the salaries awarded in Determination No. 20 of 1942.

4. The Board suggests that steps be taken immediately to obtain and record particulars as to membership of the organisations concerned in determinations operating after 19th May, 1942, i.e., those listed in paragraph 3 above, in order that the Government decision may be applied when the determinations referred to in that paragraph come into operation. Arrangements should also be made for receipt

regularly from the organisations concerned, and for recording in the department all particulars as to officers and employees subsequently joining or ceasing to be members of those organisations.

5. The following amendments which have been made in the Board's general orders might be noted in the volumes in use in your department:—

General Order 166: Delete and substitute the following:—

"Consequent upon determinations made by the Board pursuant to Regulation 74B, the following are the conditions to operate in regard to the application of determinations of the Public Service Arbitrator:—

- (1) The salaries and conditions of employment prescribed in determinations under the Arbitration (Public Service) Act which came into force after 19th May, 1942, shall be applied only to members of organisations registered under the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act and to returned soldiers;
- (2) The salaries and conditions of employment prescribed in determinations under the Arbitration (Public Service) Act in operation on the 19th May, 1942, shall, until otherwise determined, be applied to all officers and employees, whether members of the relative organisation or not, whose positions are covered by any particular determination.

General Order 387.—Insert at commencement of Order:—

"Subject to General Order 166."

General Order 476.—Insert at commencement of Order:—

"Subject to General Order 166."

That circular has been issued under the authority of the Commonwealth Government, which pretends to be fighting a war in the interests of the people. Under its authority money that is required for investment in war saving certificates and Commonwealth bonds and funds essential in order that a proper standard of living may be maintained, is being taken from those who are in temporary employment in the Commonwealth Service, seeing that they are forced to join a union.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Who issued that circular?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The Commonwealth Public Service Board. The following notice was also sent out:—

Inspectors in Charge Sections—

Particulars are required of all temporary officers on your section who are members of the Commonwealth Temporary Clerks Association. Those who are not at present members of this organisation should if they desire to

participate in benefits advise this office immediately they become members. This P.S.B. Circular should be seen by all members of your staff.

That instruction to inspectors in charge of sections is dated the 26th May last. At present there are hundreds of temporary Commonwealth employees in Western Australia, who are engaged in connection with the several branches of the Fighting Forces and with various Federal activities, including munition works. It seems to me most damnable that any section of a British community should issue a circular such as that I have read. I may be asked: "What has that to do with Western Australia seeing that it is a Federal matter?"

Hon. J. Cornell: Perhaps they want to make the returned soldiers join the R.S.L. or perhaps to join the union instead.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Perhaps the Government thinks the R.S.L. is getting too strong.

Hon. C. B. Williams: It applies mostly to the unions. That is where the scabbing comes in. You would not put the returned soldiers in the scab category, would you?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I am pleased to hear Mr. Williams's remark regarding the soldiers.

Hon. C. B. Williams: It has always been so with the unions.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Members have heard Mr. Williams apply the term "scab" to people who have perhaps given up good positions in order to become temporary clerks to assist the Commonwealth Government in these difficult times. Merely because such a person may not choose to join a union and thereby pay money into an organisation for the purpose of keeping perfectly useless secretaries in office—this at a time when the Federal Government is crying out for more manpower—he is referred to as a scab. Surely the Government itself could look after the interests of the temporary clerks employed by it and ensure that they receive proper rates of pay and conditions. On the other hand the Federal Government says, "No, you shall not be entitled to any advance in pay or to the benefit of conditions which we provide unless you pay-in to our unions." The Minister for the Army, Mr. Forde, when it is a matter of fighting for the safety of Australia, says that no coercion must be exercised—

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Of course, that is a very different matter!

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Many of these people did not require employment. Some are elderly men who have taken positions as temporary clerks to assist the country in its hour of need. Yet those men this afternoon have been designated as scabs should they not join the Temporary Clerks' Union. Those people are not interested in politics to any extent at all. Nevertheless, union secretaries have interviewed many of them to impress upon them the necessity to join a union, failing which they will not enjoy benefits under the Government's decree. The document I have read constitutes a most damning indictment of any civilised Government, as damnable an indictment as could possibly be brought against it. For that reason I have placed the matter before the House. I suggested to the editor of one newspaper that he should publish the document. While he was only too anxious to do so, the editor pointed out that before it could be printed it would have to be submitted to the Censor, and where articles contained adverse comments on Commonwealth departments, they had to be submitted to the heads of those departments for initial censoring. He pointed out that the Press could not publish such documents unless they were first censored.

Hon. C. B. Williams: They publish a lot of tripe.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I agree with that interjection; they do publish quite a lot of tripe. However, I sincerely trust that this particular matter will not be considered tripe. I have pleasure in supporting the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East): In supporting the motion I desire to add my welcome to our two new members, who come here with a certain amount of honorary public service to their credit, which I feel quite sure will stand them in good stead in this Chamber. I shall not touch on matters pertaining to the war or to Federal subjects, because I think that is rather futile. The State Parliament has a big job of its own to do, bigger perhaps than we had a few years ago, in endeavouring to protect State rights from Federal encroachment. State Parliaments can do much in furthering the war effort by maintaining a happy and contented people. My intention is to utilise this opportunity for the bringing forward of many matters of vital importance to the

people I represent, even though I may run the risk of being accused of having a parochial mentality. I congratulate the Government on having fought against uniform taxation. Ministers did the right thing, and I applaud their effort. The majority decision of the High Court makes it clear that those State Governments which opposed this Federal legislation were on sound ground. The decision shows that any Federal Government, no matter what its political creed, will be standing on shaky ground if it should desire to continue uniform taxation beyond the period fixed for its termination. I hope that the Western Australian Government of that future time, no matter of what political complexion, will bear that in mind.

I remind Ministers that the primary industries are playing a highly important part in the war effort, and I desire to connect that matter up with the manpower situation, which as regards primary industries is not at all satisfactory. We are faced definitely with a shortage of shearers. People are leaving their farms. I shall not speak at length concerning the wheat industry, because that is not so important in view of the surplus of wheat. I know, however, that people are abandoning such industries as pig-raising, dairying, and the raising of meat. On the last-mentioned industry, let me remind the House of something that happened in this State three or four months ago. At that time Western Australia was absolutely without one pound of meat in cold storage for the maintenance of our Fighting Forces. Who is to blame for that I do not know, but if the Government fools around with the price of meat and other commodities a similar position may arise again. Men will not fatten wethers and pigs if the products are to be subject to ridiculously low prices. It will be said that the shortage of meat to which I have alluded was due to the Kimberley shipping position. Perhaps it was at that time. Still, the fact is extraordinary that Western Australia should have been without a single pound of meat in cold storage when so many persons were coming here. I repeat, if the Government insists on fixing the price of meat, that position may arise once more.

Hon. C. B. Williams: You want prices fixed only for things that suit you!

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I wish to bring to the notice of the Government the serious position in the farming areas today as regards the rabbit pest. There is no labour available to poison rabbits, and the farmer himself cannot do it. I trust the Government will endeavour to get men out of the Army to cope with shearing and other operations. Efforts have been made by members of Parliament and others to get men out of the Army for shearing, but without success. Last Saturday the Northam secretary of the Shearers' Union told me that, apart from the depot sheds, he did not know of more than two or three shearers in the district ready to carry on that job. I can certify that a similar position exists in other districts, and therefore I hope the Government will use its utmost efforts to overcome the difficulty.

I intend to bring up all the grievances I have with regard to primary production. It is useless to ask primary producers to feed the Armies in Western Australia and in Australia generally if they do not receive a fair deal. Now I propose to read a letter to me from Mr. V. J. Dougan, the secretary of the Corrigin District Hospital Board, dated the 23rd July last—

I have been asked by my board to bring before your notice the following matter. It refers to the Agricultural Bank Act. Under the Act as it now stands the Commissioners have not power to make advances to settlers for the purpose of paying for hospital treatment. A farmer's assets are usually all covered by the Bank's statutory lien and a bill of sale over all the stock, and unless the farmer's position is exceptionally strong, all applications to draw against his stock are met with a curt refusal by the Bank, and the hospital is left lamenting. We are asking you, when Parliament meets again, if you would kindly move for an amendment of the Agricultural Bank Act, and thus give a measure of relief to the hospitals in this way.

It is extraordinary that farmers when falling sick or meeting with accidents should be refused admission to hospitals on the ground of inability to pay hospital fees because the Agricultural Bank has closed down on them. Under such disabilities, people cannot be expected to continue on farms. Another person, residing in the Ben-cubbin district, has written to me stating that the water was cut off on his place because the Agricultural Bank would not pay the miserable amount of the water rate. I ask the Chief Secretary to look into these

matters and see whether something cannot be done.

I trust the Government will endeavour to reduce interest rates. In our farming areas properties are over-capitalised. I acknowledge that some financial institutions are doing the best they can in that regard, but others definitely are not. Farmers cannot continue year after year with impossible loads of interest round their necks. When application is made to a bank which is not assisting sufficiently, the reply is, "We have to consider our shareholders." Last week 19 men walked off their properties in the Denmark district, making a total of 150 for the season. Such facts do not aid the country. The Government has a big job in helping people on the land. I can assure Ministers and the military authorities that if something is not done, they will wake up some day to find that there is not enough food in Western Australia to maintain them all. I know a man who made £500 a year from pigs, but today he has no pigs left because there is nobody to look after them. The Government and the military authorities should co-operate to rectify these matters. At present there is no co-operation whatever between the three or four departments concerned, who simply end by saying, "The military authorities will not permit it." Mr. Forde, the Federal Minister for the Army, said that every facility would be made available for the obtaining of shearers, but that has not been done. The State Government should use its utmost efforts in this direction.

Now as to masked headlights. I shall deal with that phase only as applying on country roads. Last session this House disallowed certain regulations, and in another place members of all parties expressed their disapproval of masked headlights, especially on country roads. About a month later the Minister for Civil Defence rushed to Canberra and obtained the gazettal of a Federal regulation over-riding what the State Parliament had done. That is not at all satisfactory. How does the State Government uphold the rights of this State Parliament? In the rural areas one would not find a man in a hundred who does not express strong disapproval of the unreasonable conditions under which we have to drive around the country at night. Only last Saturday afternoon I was driving to Northam with my masked headlights—and I use the most ex-

pensive masks obtainable—when I encountered a train running between Spencer's Brook and Northam on a section alongside the road. That train carried an enormous headlight. It is no exaggeration to say that the glare of that light could be seen ten miles away. Yet I had to proceed along the road bordering the railway with masked headlights. In fact, later on I ran off the road. In Northam itself I met a military truck with the masks off.

Hon. L. Craig: You should have taken yours off.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: No; the inspector at Northam is very particular about that sort of thing. If he saw a member of Parliament driving a car with the masks off, he would speedily take action. I leave it to other members to talk about this question as it affects the city, but I do believe it would not impair the war effort one bit if at a distance of 30 to 40 miles from the coast headlight masks could be taken off. I have asked the military authorities how the war effort would be impaired if we could travel along country roads with our lights unmasked. I shall be glad if the Chief Secretary will deal with that matter when replying. I do not think he will be able to furnish a satisfactory answer. To say that the military authorities require the masking of lights is useless. In fact, it is nonsense, because those authorities themselves do not pay regard to the regulation. This morning I saw a hundred trucks travelling along the road with their lamps masked, but I believe many of the masks are taken off when night comes along.

Next I wish to draw members' attention to a letter which appeared in the "West Australian," a letter which has been answered by the Leader of the Opposition. It does definitely affect Country Party members here; in fact, all members of this Chamber. I propose to read this letter and to have something to say about it. It was written by Mr. C. Cross and the address given is Parliament House, Perth. It reads as follows:—

My attention has been drawn to a statement published in "The West Australian" last Friday in a report of a speech made by Mr. C. G. Latham, M.L.A., at the Primary Producers' annual meeting, in regard to the marketing of eggs legislation. According to your report, Mr. Latham stated: "Last session a Bill was introduced in the Assembly by a Labour member. As originally introduced this measure was very cumbersome and unworkable, but in an effort to assist in the orderly marketing of

eggs, substantial amendments were moved by the Country Party and carried, but the Labour member responsible for the Bill did not have it proceeded with in the Council."

The fact is that, so anxious was Mr. Latham to secure better marketing legislation for the poultry-farmers, that he himself sought to have the Bill wiped out on a point of order (see Hansard, p. 2220). In regard to its introduction in the Council, a very real attempt was made to have the Bill introduced there, as I asked almost every member personally to introduce the Bill in that Chamber, because as is well known no Assembly member can introduce a Bill in the Upper House.

I want members to particularly listen to this part of the letter—

But it will be well known to Mr. Latham that my failure to secure any sponsor for the Bill in the Council was in all probability due to the active operation of a well-known Country Party Legislative Council member who persuaded members to kill the Bill by refusing to sponsor it in any way, thus making history. Failure to secure better marketing legislation for egg producers can thus be laid at the door of the Country Party.

I know perfectly well that no Country Party member tried to persuade anybody not to introduce that Bill in the Legislative Council. This letter has gone out to the constituents of Mr. Cross and to my constituents and the constituents of Mr. Hamersley and other members, the idea being to suggest that we tried to do something against the interests of poultry farmers. The allegation is not true. I know of no Country Party member who made any attempt to persuade any other member of the House against introducing the measure. It is an insult to suggest to other members of this Chamber that they could be so influenced by a member of the Country Party as to refrain from introducing a Bill that was passed in another place. Fancy the two Ministers and the strong-minded Mr. Williams being so influenced by a member of the Country Party! I thought that I ought to bring this matter up, because I do not consider that Mr. Cross should be allowed to get away with that sort of thing.

A parochial matter with which I wish to deal is the question of members of Parliament having tea at Parliament House. Country members who reside in Perth during the session will experience difficulty in securing something to eat in the evening. Later on we shall probably be sitting until seven o'clock and we shall find it hard to get into restaurants which are full of soldiers and sailors and others. I suggest to the

Government that a portion of the dining-room could easily be blacked out at little expense to make provision for at least 15 to 20 members who would like to have tea there, and I hope something along those lines will be done.

I support the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply but I do not want the Government to think that we are altogether satisfied with it, particularly in regard to matters appertaining to primary producers. We hope that some relief will be afforded in connection with matters I have mentioned and in directions that will be referred to by other members, so that primary producers will be shown that they are regarded as being an important part of the community, since it is an essential phase of the war effort to feed the people.

Hon. SIR HAL COLEBATCH (Metropolitan): It has been the usual—though not invariable—practice to entrust the task of moving the adoption of the Address-in-reply to a very junior member of the House. On this occasion the Government entrusted it to an older member, with very happy results. We had an excellent speech from Mr. Moore and I propose to begin where he left off. I strongly recommend to the Standing Orders Committee Mr. Moore's suggestion that, at all events during the continuance of the war, a time limit should be placed on members' speeches.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: It is the practice of the Senate and no difficulty could arise out of it, because there are two special provisions in relation to the Senate's Standing Order: one, that it shall not apply to Ministers moving second readings of Bills or answering the debate on the Address-in-reply, and the other, that when a member's time has elapsed it is competent for another member to rise and move that he be allowed a short extension, which is never refused. No difficulties could arise and I think all members would welcome the proposed limit. Another matter referred to by Mr. Moore, which I think there is no harm in my mentioning, is the agitation for the opening of a second front. I think we would do well to deprecate any such agitation.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: In England it is almost entirely confined to the extreme Left, to members of the Communist Party,

and it is a significant fact that amongst Parliamentarians the greatest friend of Russia, the man who knows most about that country—Sir Stafford Cripps—deprecates agitations of this kind. Why? Because he is in a position to know the entire situation and is aware that the how, when and where of the opening of a second front cannot be decided by popular clamour but must be the deliberate decision of those who know, and it must be a decision kept entirely secret until such time as it can be put into operation. I know there is a certain amount of agitation in Western Australia and a certain amount of broadcasting in that direction, but in our small way we might do well to deprecate anything of the kind.

Reference was made by Mr. Moore to a matter regarding which I am not entirely in agreement with him. There is only one piece of legislation specifically promised in the Lieut-Governor's Speech. That legislation is designed to over-ride a decision of the Arbitration Court. The Speech says—

The Government takes great pride in this State's record of industrial peace—

A proper pride too—

—and is gravely concerned that this should be the only State in Australia in which the workers have been deprived of their cost of living variations in the basic wage.

We are told that a Bill is to be introduced to alter that position. It must be remembered that the Arbitration Court has complete power to make such variations, such increases in wages in accordance with variations in the cost of living, and that it has refused to make those increases after the hearing of exhaustive evidence. The Court has given reasons for its decision, those reasons summed up being that it does not consider that it would be in the best interests of Western Australia to grant the increases at the present time. Altogether apart from the merits of the case I venture to think that this Parliament should be very slow to over-ride the decision of a properly-appointed tribunal. The President of the Arbitration Court—Mr. President Dwyer—is not unsympathetic towards the cause of the workers. He never has been. In the judgment he gave in this case he showed himself to be entirely sympathetic and fully understanding. Giving his reasons for the court's decision, he said—

The basic wage of this court even when not adjusted, is the highest in the Common-

wealth in purchasing power except in the wealthier and more prosperous State of Queensland, and even there if the statutory requirements of three dependent children are taken into account it is more generous in its incidence.

Our basic wage exceeds the Commonwealth basic wage for this State by—at that time—4s. 5d. per week.

The State's average weekly wage per adult male worker is the highest in the Commonwealth both in amount and in purchasing power.

The State's weekly hours of work are the lowest in the Commonwealth.

Those are very vital and sound reasons for the action taken by the Court. It is significant that the representative of the employees in the Court made no attempt whatever to answer the case put up by the President. He contented himself with the argument that—

For many years we had enjoyed a position of superiority over other States by our basic wage standards.

His contention was that we must therefore continue to enjoy that position of superiority, in spite of the war and in spite of the fact that our industries are all finding it extremely difficult to compete against the industries of the other States! What is the position of the Western Australian worker on the basic wage as related to the cost of living? Before the war the basic wage was 77s. It is now 90s. 5d. That increase corresponds almost exactly with the increase in the cost of living. The increase was mentioned by the Prime Minister only a few days ago when he took credit to his Government for having so ordered things that it was only 17.9 per cent. If members work it out they will see that that 17.9 per cent. increase corresponds almost exactly with the increase in the basic wage from 77s. to 90s. 5d.

There are one or two other matters in connection with the basic wage to which we should give consideration before taking on ourselves the responsibility of over-riding the Arbitration Court and insisting on doing something the Arbitration Court, after hearing the evidence, says would be contrary to the best interests of Western Australia. The basic wage is supposed to meet the requirements of the average worker and his family. It is, however, paid to many thousands of single men and to men who have no children. I am not suggesting that that is wrong, but I do suggest that it sets up a condition of affairs that the worker is entitled to consider and that we are not entitled to brush

aside. When we come to those who feel the cost of living most severely, mainly the men with two or three children, who really need the money, we find that they have child endowment to help them over their difficulties. All these matters have been carefully considered by the Arbitration Court and I do not think that this Parliament, or at all events this House, will be hasty in saying, "We are going to take the power out of the Arbitration Court's hands," and, "You must do this whether you think it right or wrong." On several occasions the Prime Minister said, "All classes of the community must be prepared to cut down." I want to ask: Are we to adopt the position that it is only the wage-earner who is to be exempt from sacrifice in the manner of reduction of his wage as compared with the cost of living? I have already pointed out that he has not been subjected to reduction. He has not been refused increases in accordance with the cost of living, but he enjoys certain advantages because of the war. Undoubtedly there is much greater security of employment now.

Point of Order.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: I rise on a point of order. I would like your ruling, Mr. President, on something which has been running through my mind for the last few minutes. Is it competent for a member to enter into detail, as the hon. member is doing, on the subject-matter of a Bill that he will have every opportunity to deal with when it comes before the Chamber?

The President: I rule that the hon. member is perfectly in order.

Debate Resumed.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: It is quite obvious that I cannot go into details on a Bill I have not seen and know nothing about. I am simply answering the case put forward by Mr. Moore. On the other hand, a great many sections of the community are suffering severely as a result of the war, and to whom, I suppose, it is impossible to give any relief. They are amongst the most deserving sections, particularly in the country districts. The woolgrower and wheat-grower, after many years of privation, find themselves facing extraordinary difficulties because of the war, and many small business men in the city and country districts have been driven from their occupations. Those are the people who are suffering most, and it is difficult to give them any relief.

We were told that this was to be done so that there would be equality of sacrifice between the wage-earner in Western Australia and the wage-earner in the other States. Personally I am getting rather impatient with the talk of equality of sacrifice. I will give one illustration of how it is put into effect. Many business people in this city have been compelled, at great cost and at tremendous detriment to their businesses, to take out the glass shop fronts and replace them with wood. It cannot be pretended that that improves their position or helps them to earn income, but they are compelled to treat that expenditure as capital expenditure. They cannot deduct it from their income and thereby obtain some little relief in taxation. When, however, it comes to the S.P. bookmaker carrying on something illegal and anti-social, he is permitted to deduct from his income, not the fines imposed upon himself but those imposed on his satellites whom he pays to break the law in his interests. That, I suppose, is what is called "equality of sacrifice!"

I will make brief reference to the regulations disallowed by this House during the special session. The first is in regard to shop signs. I was the mover of the motion for the disallowance of that regulation, and I made it abundantly clear that my objections were to the absurdity of preventing shopkeepers from putting on their boarded shop fronts such information as they desired. They were restricted to their bare names and types of businesses. Since the regulation has been disallowed no new regulation has been imposed, and now we are told that certain business people who, at the request of the City Council, erected brick shelters for the safety of the public, are at a disadvantage because other shopkeepers are making miniature displays in their windows. That may be the case, but it is still open to the Government, if it feels inclined, to enact fresh regulations which this House would not object to if they were not unreasonable and did not impose on the business people restrictions which are unnecessary in the interests of public safety. It seems not unreasonable, in dealing with the business houses that have erected public shelters, that the bigger businesses should have made these provisions. It is, without a doubt, the small businessman who is suffering at the present time.

Then there was the matter of the black-out or brown-out. I agree with what Mr. Parker said. It does seem to me an extraordinary thing that the Government and the military authorities could not have devised some system which would have afforded ample protection to the public and at the same time reduced the number of fatal and other serious accidents. Nothing has happened to justify what has been done, and I can quite imagine people saying it is easy to be wise after the event. But in wartime we want wisdom before the event. It should not be beyond the wisdom of the civil and military authorities to devise regulations which would be amply protective and which would obviate the number of fatal and serious accidents. I will go so far as to say that these accidents are not the worst consequence of the black-out.

The Government is to be commended for starting the anti-vice squad, which, I believe, is doing very good work. But what I want to know is: Why has the Government waited until now to do this? The evil was obvious for many months, and the root of it is to be found in the black-out conditions. If these conditions were to be observed everyone knew what the result would be. Why was not action taken to check it? Why was not the present action taken three months ago before much of the harm had been done?

The surplus for the year is undoubtedly satisfactory. I hope that any further information afforded to us will not show that it is counteracted by the heavy deficit in July. An explanation has already been given, and I am not going to suggest that the surplus for last year was not entirely genuine. Not much good purpose will be served by commenting on Commonwealth finance. We are told that, as a result of uniform taxation, the Government will get an extra £12,500,000. I would like to see some evidence that it will be carefully spent. Already there has been an increase in the note issue which, whilst it may not be immediately alarming, is sufficient at all events to make people think, particularly when we see that a special conference of the Australian Labour Party is to be convened apparently to ask the Government why it has not put into force Labour's policy for the financing of the war by the issuing of Commonwealth Bank credit. I hope the conference will be held soon, and that the Government will make

it clear that it has no intention to do something which will undoubtedly undermine the financial stability of the country and cause serious dislocation in our war effort.

During the special session we devoted a good deal of time to two other matters, one of which was the position of goldmining, and the other was uniform taxation. The position in regard to goldmining has not yet been made clear. We hope that wisdom will prevail and that the co-operation of the mining companies will be availed of to the greatest extent so that all the labour required for military purposes may be provided, and at the same time the goldmining industry not destroyed to a greater extent than is inevitable. We cannot get away from the fact that when many men are taken away from a small mine, particularly in the outlying districts, and leave the community without any means of livelihood, a great disservice is done to the State. People will be flocking into Perth, and I do not know what they will be able to do. Again, speaking of equality of sacrifice, there must be hundreds of instances throughout the country districts where people are being subjected to very acute hardship. It is probably unavoidable but in the matter of manpower and the working of our goldmines a good deal might be done to prevent the worst cases of dislocation. I have no doubt that the Government is fully aware of the necessity to protect those mines which have to be temporarily put out of operation, so that they will be available to be worked after the war, when they will form a very important avenue of employment.

We dealt with the matter of uniform taxation, and we can now only wait and see what happens. The Government did quite right in contesting the case, and the decision that it was a defence measure should give us some hope that we will be able to establish our State rights when the war is over. We must wait and see if the promise of increased revenue will be realised. It will be interesting to find out whether, after a year or two, taxpayers will be getting the relief which, in many cases, they thought they would.

I hope that, during this session, the Government will introduce a Bill to provide for third party insurance in keeping with the recommendations of the Select Committee. If it is not prepared to do that, I hope, at all events, that it will introduce a Bill at ar

early stage of the session so that both Houses will have an opportunity to consider it and suggest any amendments they think fit. I also hope that the Companies Bill will be proceeded with. The Government is deserving of credit for the action it has taken in extending technical education, but it has not gone far enough. It is a difficult matter which has been sorely neglected for many years, and not only by this Government. Today neither teachers nor buildings are available. The Government should regard it as one of the most important features of its educational policy and extend it, particularly in the country districts, to the high schools where they will have a certain foundation for that type of work.

We hear a good deal about reconstruction after the war. My only hope is that the reconstruction will be on sound principles and will aim at permanent and general, and not merely temporary and local, improvements. I trust that we shall see the wisdom of maintaining our alliances after this war and not breaking them up as we did after the previous war. I read with a great deal of satisfaction certain remarks of the Right Hon. R. G. Menzies dealing with the high protective tariff of Australia, and also the remarks of the chairman of the Tariff Board, Mr. McConaghy. Both of them recognised that Australia must observe the post-war conditions of the Atlantic Charter and Lease-Lend Agreement. It must frame its future economy, having regard to the rights and interests of other countries. It is particularly refreshing to find a realisation of the necessity for placing in a better position the primary industries of Australia. The political stability and the economic welfare of every country depend upon the man on the land being in a prosperous position. This applies perhaps more in Western Australia than in the other States, but it certainly does apply fundamentally to the economy of Australia as a whole.

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

House adjourned at 4.1 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 4th August, 1942.

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

QUESTIONS (6).

COMMONWEALTH AND STATE RELATIONSHIPS.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON asked the Premier: 1, Is it the intention of the Government to give the House an opportunity to discuss Commonwealth and State relationships, more particularly covering economic and supply problems, before the departure of the State's representative to the forthcoming Loan Council meeting? 2, Will the Government, for this special purpose, arrange for the suspension of the Standing Orders?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (for the Premier) replied: (1) and (2) The Address-in-reply debate furnishes the opportunity suggested.

BANK CLOSURES IN COUNTRY.

Mr. SEWARD asked the Premier: In April last I notified the Government that certain banks were closing some country branches, which necessitated their clients transferring their accounts to another bank. In the case of debtor clients this involved the discharge of a mortgage and the registration of a fresh one, charges for which the bank client was in no way responsible: 1, Has any arrangement been arrived at between the banks to enable such mortgages to be transferred by indorsement or otherwise free of cost to the client? 2, If not will the Government take early legislative action to enable that to be done, or, alternatively, amend such Acts as may be necessary to free such mortgages of Title Office fees and stamp duty?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (for the Premier) replied: 1 and 2, I am advised by the chairman of the Associated