

question on the notice paper with regard to it. The matter is so serious to the country districts that I must crave the indulgence of the House to bring it before members. As has been admitted, the first duty of a farmer is to produce wheat, or whatever other product is grown in his district. That is necessary for our war effort, and it is also necessary to enable the farmer to meet his commitments.

Leave to Continue.

THE PREMIER (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [6.19]: I move:—

That the hon. member be granted leave to continue his speech at the next sitting.

Motion put and passed.

House adjourned at 6.20 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 16th April, 1942.

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The **PRESIDENT** took the Chair at 11 a.m., and read prayers.

QUESTION—TRANSPORT.

As to Overloading.

Hon. J. A. **DIMMITT** asked the Chief Secretary: 1, Is the Government aware that residents in the vicinity of the Canning highway and the area served by the South Perth tramways are being subjected to continued inconvenience owing to the insufficient, and overloading of, existing bus services? 2, When will the Government put into service the buses which were promised for the Perth-Como route?

The **CHIEF SECRETARY** replied: 1, Yes. 2, As soon as staff is available to operate them.

MOTION—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT.

To Disallow Regulation.

Debate resumed from the previous day on the following motion by Hon. G. B. Wood (East):—

That Regulation 8 made under the Industries Assistance Act, 1915-1940, as published in the "Government Gazette" on the 13th day of February, 1942, and laid on the Table of the House on the 9th day of April, 1942, be and is hereby disallowed.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [11.5]: On a previous occasion when a motion was successfully moved for the disallowance of a regulation dealing with the question of drought relief, complaints were made that there had been considerable delay in regard to the framing of the regulation. Members will no doubt recollect that when I replied to the motion on that particular occasion I stated very definitely that the delay arose from the fact that the Commonwealth Government had not made known the rate of interest that would apply to this particular amount of money. There has been a further delay and it is only within recent weeks that we have been advised by the Commonwealth Government of the rate of interest that is to apply. The rate charged by the Commonwealth Government to the State is 3 per cent. Consequently it was considered desirable that, before any fresh regulation was made, information should be obtained and that accounts for the delay that has taken place between the time the original regulation was disallowed by this House and the promulgation of the regulation that Mr. Wood now desires to have disallowed.

Members are aware that the conditions laid down in regard to this money provide that for the first year any advance made to a farmer shall be free of interest and that for the succeeding six years, if the money is still owing, the rate of interest paid by the farmer shall be half the rate paid by the State Government to the Commonwealth. Therefore, those farmers will be called upon to pay a rate of interest of 1½ per cent. It is rather important we should bear that in mind because Mr. Wood, in moving for the disallowance of this regulation on this occasion did not go into any particular detail in regard to the reason for disallowance other than to make one or two brief statements and refer to utterances by somebody else—

where. Therefore I want members to understand just what the position is.

In the first place there is no doubt that farmers had been experiencing a very bad time; so much so that the State and Commonwealth Governments were agreed that some assistance was necessary. Eventually, after conferences had been held on the subject, it was decided that assistance should be rendered in two ways: First of all by means of a straight-out grant which would not have to be repaid, and, secondly, by means of loan money under the conditions I have just explained. It should be understood that any farmer entitled to loan money under this scheme was also entitled to a grant and that therefore those farmers about whom Mr. Wood is so concerned are not only receiving the money to which he has referred, under the terms I have mentioned, but also receive their quota of the grant to which they are entitled. The loan money was intended to enable the farmers to carry on for that year. In many instances it is a truism to say that had it not been for the money available from this fund, they could not possibly have carried on.

Should any Government advance money to assist a farmer or anyone else, it is essential that some security be obtained, and, in view of the fact that the State had to accept full responsibility for the whole of the money, I do not think anyone could complain against the action of the Government in obtaining the necessary security for the repayment of money when it was possible for it to be repaid by the farmer. Mr. Wood takes the point that as the money is to be repaid in full by the State Government at the end of seven years, therefore any farmer who received an advance from the fund should also have seven years within which to make the repayment. In support of that point he quoted a statement in the Federal Parliament by Mr. Anthony who at that time was Deputy Minister for Commerce. That statement was quoted by Mr. Wood in support of his contention, and I propose to quote the same statement in opposition to the hon. member's contention. I think members will agree with me that my interpretation is the correct one. The words to which I wish to refer are those that were stressed by Mr. Wood himself and were—

Hon. members will note that the States are being allowed a period of four years in which to make their first repayments of prin-

cipal. In fairness to the States they must be given an opportunity to recover some of the moneys which they, in turn, will lend to the drought-stricken farmers.

What other interpretation can be placed on those words than that it was the intention of the Commonwealth Government that the State Government should collect repayments from farmers who had received advances from the fund whenever it was possible for those farmers to make such repayments. Therefore instead of the words of Mr. Anthony being regarded as supporting the case submitted by Mr. Wood, they actually support the attitude of the State Government and of the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank regarding the application of this particular regulation. I wish it to be distinctly understood that we have no desire to be harsh or unfair to any farmer who is forced into the position of having to take advantage of these loan funds. The remarkable feature is that while Mr. Wood suggests that there is a tremendous volume of discontent amongst the farmers with respect to this regulation, we have had hardly any complaints at all.

Hon. G. B. Wood: What is the use of complaining?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: In instances where complaints have been made, I venture to assert that there has been no justification for them whatever.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: What, no justification at all?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: None at all. It must be remembered that the Agricultural Bank Commissioners, where advances have been made to farmers, have said to them, "If after you have repaid to the bank the loan money that has been advanced to you you still have sufficient money to carry on for the next year, we will expect that that money shall be repaid." That is action similar to that taken in Victoria and New South Wales.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Who is to decide whether the farmer has sufficient money to enable him to carry on?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank.

Hon. J. Cornell: And that is from season to season.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am coming to that point. In those instances where a farmer was not in a position to repay the amount in full, the Commissioners have sug-

gested an amount that each individual farmer could reasonably be expected to pay. It might be £10 or £20; whatever amount was suggested would be the figure considered reasonable in all the circumstances. In those instances where it was not possible for the farmer to make any repayment—unfortunately there were quite a number of such instances—the Commissioners have made further funds available to him at the same low rate of interest, but the money so advanced has been made available out of the repayments made by other farmers who were in a position to make repayments.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: But the farmer is still under I.A.B. conditions, and that is what he is worried about.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am surprised to hear the hon. member make that statement.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: I know it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member surely recognises that the Agricultural Bank must have some security.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Of course, but not over the women and children and everything else.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is futile for the hon. member to talk like that.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: It is not; it is correct.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is an absolutely futile statement. Had the security been over the crop alone, the hon. member well knows that the money loaned and not repaid at the end of the first year would have represented an unsecured debt and the State Government would have been responsible for the repayment. Mr. Piesse is most unfair and in making such a statement I do not think he is acting in the best interests of the farmers.

Hon. H. L. Roche: The farmers think he is.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not think he is doing so by any means. I reiterate that very few complaints have been received from farmers and in a large percentage of instances where farmers have been unable to make repayments, they have received further advances from money refunded by more fortunate producers.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: It was because they would go under the I.A.B. that repayments were made in some cases.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I think the position has been made perfectly clear. Unless the money loaned to farmers is repaid, the general taxpayer will be responsible for the total indebtedness. In view of the fact

that the farmers were also in receipt of an absolute grant in addition to advances from the fund under discussion, I cannot see any reasonable objection to the regulation as now framed. I say without any hesitation at all that had it not been for the action taken by the Agricultural Bank Commissioners and the method adopted regarding the advances, many of the farmers would have had to walk off their holdings, instead of which they are carrying on today. I repeat that in those instances where farmers have not been able to repay one penny of the advance, and where it has been necessary for further money to be made available to them, funds are being advanced to enable them to carry on, and they are made available under the self-same conditions that applied to the original advance.

If Mr. Wood had his way instead of the money being made available at such a low rate of interest, and under such advantageous conditions, it would have to be advanced under the ordinary I.A.B. conditions, interest rates and so forth. I suggest that if the action proposed by the hon. member is successful, the effect will be that many of the farmers who are not in a position to make repayments will not be able to carry on. On the other hand, under the regulation the Agricultural Bank will be able to make further advances so that the farmers may continue on their holdings from year to year, and the money made available to the State Government by means of this fund will be utilised over and over again, if necessary, to assist farmers who are really suffering as a result of drought conditions. Fortunately, many of the farmers experienced a particularly satisfactory season last year. I almost referred to a particularly good year, but I should perhaps adhere to the expression, "satisfactory season."

Hon. J. Cornell: But that good year followed on two bad years.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is so. The money under discussion was not advanced in order that the farmers might meet their liabilities incurred over a number of years, but was solely for the purpose of enabling them to carry on for that one year. Other farmers, as hon. members will recollect—

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Oh, not for one year!

Hon. G. B. Wood: That money was not advanced for one year.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not like to be misunderstood. This money was ad-

vanced for the purpose of enabling those men to carry on for that year. That is undoubtedly so. The purpose was to enable them to carry on for that year; and if they were not able to carry on in the year after, further arrangements would have to be made, and they were made under the conditions I have explained. It is for that reason I say that if any other conditions had been laid down it would not have been possible for those men to carry on any longer, unless, of course, they were able to go on paying interest on advances with money obtained from some other source. It matters not how we talk around the subject.

We have to recognise that there is a responsibility on the State to see that a fair thing is done by the farmers, and then that the farmers do a fair thing by the State. Members are aware that there is no additional charge regarding this money. As to the administration, it is free of charge. The only charge against the money after the first year is the rate of $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. interest which the farmers are being called upon to pay. I regard that arrangement as highly advantageous, and especially so where the farmer was not able to repay the whole of the advance after the first year. Such a farmer is gaining a great advantage by being allowed to continue to owe that money when his only liability in connection with it is interest at the rate of $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. per annum.

Next with regard to another point which the mover desires to make—that the Government has done something illegal. The hon. member knows full well that the Government has done nothing except what it is entitled to do under the regulation. In the main this regulation operates now just as it did previously. Hon. members are aware that unless the Government has a regulation, it possesses no power to enforce the conditions it may have laid down. So, no matter what this House may decide, whether it decides to disallow the regulation or not, some regulation must be in force. If the present regulation is disallowed, then the Government will have to promulgate another regulation. I remind the House that this money has already been advanced for a period of about 12 months.

Hon. G. B. Wood: The responsibility is on you.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: As I said previously, if it is necessary that the Government should have satisfactory security for

any money for which it is responsible in the long run to the Commonwealth Government, there can be little change in the conditions set out in this regulation. It is just as well to recognise that fact. Surely Mr. Wood will not argue that the State Government should be prepared to make a grant of this money to the farmers?

Hon. G. B. Wood: It would be a terrible shock! Why say that?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: What is the inference we must draw from the hon. member's remarks? First of all he objected to the Agricultural Bank Commissioners being the authority to say whether or not the farmer has sufficient money to carry on. Perhaps he would prefer the farmer to be the authority. If the farmer then merely said, "I cannot repay this money," and said the same thing the next year, and the year thereafter, until the end of the seven years, eventually the State would be responsible for payment of the whole debt. I do not think the mover wants that state of affairs at all. I am inclined to think that, notwithstanding his remarks, he wants a fair thing to be done by both parties; and, in my opinion, this regulation provides for that.

Let me reiterate that it is the Government's intention to continue readvancing drought relief moneys where further advances are necessary in the case of men who have applied for and obtained advances in the past. Unless the recipients of this money in the first place, are prepared to repay the advances as opportunity offers, there will be no more moneys available under these conditions, and a grave injustice will be done to a considerable number of highly deserving farmers—men who, through no fault of their own, have not only suffered the drought conditions which were responsible for advances being made in this way, but have also suffered in a similar way since that period.

Hon. G. B. Wood: What, from drought?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: In a similar way. Yes, because of drought, because of poor crops. If it is expected that those men shall receive continued assistance, is it not only reasonable that they should receive that continued assistance under the conditions attending the original loan? That is the desire of the Government. I am afraid that if there is an insistence that this money shall not be repaid under the existing conditions, it will not be possible to continue the assistance. There are large numbers of clients not

only of the Agricultural Bank but also of private banking institutions who have already repaid, if not in full, at least a great percentage of the money they borrowed in the first place.

Hon. J. Cornell: They had no option but to do so.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not think it fair to say that. When this question was dealt with previously, I quoted cases—and I could quote them again if required—where men had many hundreds of pounds remaining after they had repaid in full the amount of their borrowings. By no stretch of imagination can it be argued either by them or by anyone else that they did not have sufficient money to carry on for the year.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Are those the only cases?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: This money was advanced solely for the purpose of allowing the farmers to carry on, and the advances were not made for the purpose of covering liabilities that had been incurred in previous years. In every case these are examined in accordance with the crop the farmer produced in the previous year, which, in many instances, was very considerable. In addition, the money the producers were allowed to borrow was sufficient to carry them over the stile for the time being and in some cases—they were good ones I will allow—the results were particularly good. Where the results were not good they were met by the Agricultural Bank Commissioners so that they were still able to carry on, which they would not be able to do if the money were not being administered in accordance with this regulation.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: Were these moneys paid under pressure, or had the farmers no option?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: These moneys were repaid in accordance with this regulation, but each case was examined by the Agricultural Bank Commissioners. In those cases where, in the opinion of the Commissioners, the farmers were able satisfactorily to carry on for that year, in addition to repaying the amount they had borrowed, that money was repaid. In those cases where, in the opinion of the Commissioners they could not repay the whole of the advance and carry on, the Commissioners fixed a particular amount. In some cases it was very small; in others it was a fairly large pro-

portion of the total amount advanced. In other cases, where it was not possible for any repayment to be made, the Commissioners only said, "We will carry the amount you have already received," but, in addition, "We will make additional money available so that you can carry on this year."

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: Out of the amounts which had been repaid?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, and which money had been advanced at the same rate of interest, $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

Hon. G. B. Wood: How much money is in the fund now?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not know. The amount involved is £570,000.

Hon. G. B. Wood: That is the original sum.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: In the limited time I have had at my disposal I have not been able to discuss the matter at any length with the Agricultural Bank Commissioners, but I am advised that a considerable sum of money has been repaid in full, and that a fair proportion of the money which has been so repaid has been re-advanced to other farmers who would not be able, otherwise, to carry on. It has been re-advanced under the terms of this regulation. Under these circumstances, I must oppose the motion and I hope that, on this occasion, in the interests of the farmers themselves, this House will not agree to the disallowance of this regulation.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [11.35]: After hearing the Chief Secretary one would think that everything in the garden was lovely and that the people in charge of the administration of this fund were benefactors. Last session I voted against the disallowance of this regulation, mainly, as I stated then, because I thought we ought to accept the regulation and give it a trial, to see how the party charged with the collection of this money would face up to the situation; and individual cases could be decided on their merits. The regulation was not disallowed because of the burdens, nor because of phraseology. It was disallowed because of its application. I warned members who voted against it that what has happened would happen; that there would be nothing in the application and that before the House could meet this regulation would be promulgated almost in its entirety again—and that is exactly what has happened.

I do not admit that the Government has done anything illegal. While the regulation is in force and not disallowed, its application is equivalent to that of an Act of Parliament. Anything done up to the time of its disallowance is legal. It was questionable tactics to put it up in its particular form. Down the years there have been regulations applying to the mining industry which were drastic and could be drastic in their application. They were disallowed, but before they were amended and promulgated the actual people who would be affected were given some consideration, and the regulations modified in accordance with their wishes. That has not been done in this case.

Since we last met I have covered a fair area of this State in the South Province. I candidly admit, to use a vulgarism, that by and large the psychology existing today amongst the men on the land is rotten. That is the answer to the question of the Chief Secretary as to why no protest has been made in most cases. I happen to have been for 15 years or more on the land committee of the R.S.L. and am today its chairman. It now meets about twice a year. That is construed into a belief that all the men on the land are satisfied. The right construction is that they are fed up.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Quite right; it is hopeless!

Hon. J. CORNELL: Their position is hopeless and the outlook is worse. Jimmy Cornell is nothing if he is not honest. Within the last few months I have said to constituents of mine and old friends, when they have asked my candid opinion about the land, "Why not get out?"

Hon. H. L. Roche: That is the only advice you can give them.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I have said, "Why not get out and come down here and get in where the going is good?" No man, with any semblance of honesty, who travels the remote agricultural parts of this State could do otherwise. The end can be seen. Eventually they will have to get out. If, tomorrow, the Government were to endeavour to make the trade unions of this country repay half a million of money, and to say how it must be paid, with no right of appeal against such a decision, the unions would not stand for it.

The position of Agricultural Bank clients with whom I have come in contact is that the inspectors ask them their requirements.

They say it is this and that. Although I supported this regulation and the Act that authorised it, I never, in my wildest moments, thought that the full force of the amended Industries Assistance Act as altered by six words would be construed so as to place the drought relief scheme solely under the Act. I do not think it was fair to do so. I have dealt with the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank on the basis that each man's case has its own peculiarities. I have asked, in connection with drought relief, "Put up a case to me and I will endeavour to treat for you, individually." They say, "What is the use?" That is the sole reason why there are no complaints.

The Agricultural Bank Commissioners should not be the sole deciding factor as to how much a client should repay. The Agricultural Bank Commissioners have set out on a file a man's position and they say to him, "You can repay the lot, or you can repay so much." In another case they might say, "You are a married man. We will allow you 30s. a week sustenance." That is equivalent to saying, "I have to keep an evacuee on 2s. 6d. a day." If I had to keep someone on 2s. 6d. a day, I would cut down my regimen of living and he would have to do the same. It would be bread and water sometimes. The man on the land has to live on what he gets, and his living is hard and very often meagre. Anyone who goes amongst them knows it.

What are the opportunities for his children? None at all. He cannot have them educated. The latest move is an attack on the very heart and soul, limb and body of the correspondence school on which many farmers of this State depend. The Teachers' Training College has been taken over by the Military Authorities and the principal and pupils have had to pack up their kits and find another place in which to live. I feel very sympathetic regarding these people. After what the Chief Secretary has said, it seems that the general taxpayer will have to pay £500,000 if the farmer cannot pay it. In view of what we see every hour and minute of the day, it would not be an ungracious act to say to the farmer, "Well, you need not pay anything at all." If these men are forced off their holdings, and I am sure a lot of them will go—

The Chief Secretary: A lot of them have gone.

Hon. J. CORNELL: That is so. It will be easier for many of them to go off their land, and immediately they do so, that will be the end of the show. Before any man leaves his holding, the authorities should extend to him consideration similar to that which they are prepared to give a new man. On this occasion I intend to vote for the motion. I do not care whether the Government finds itself up against things in the matter of the repayment of this money. We are justified in putting every obstacle in the way of the Government respecting its action in forcing 80 per cent. of the men to pay up. That is merely taking the line of reason.

If the non-repayment of the half million of money will mean that a lot of farmers will remain on their holdings who would otherwise walk off, our action will have been justified. A man who sticks to his land is one of the best assets of the State and I intend to give him all possible support. I realise that another regulation will be promulgated by the Government. I know that some of these farmers have already paid up. I have explained the reason why they paid; they did so because they had practically no option; the money was taken from them. The Agricultural Bank said in effect, "There is your position. You are able to pay and you must pay it off." We feel that the farmers have merely been appealing from Caesar to Caesar and have received no consideration.

HON. H. L. ROCHE (South-East) [11.48]: I support the motion for the disallowance of the regulation. It seems to me that the Government has committed a shocking breach of faith in introducing a regulation such as this to implement an amendment of the Industries Assistance Act passed a couple of sessions ago. I believe that Ministers are destroying any basis of confidence in them that exists in the agricultural areas, confidence in their good faith and respect for the pronouncements they make regarding the farmer and his position. Seemingly they are deaf, dumb and blind to what is taking place, or is it that when they speak of the need for increasing production and stabilising the industry, they are talking with their tongues in their cheeks? They are deaf to all the representations that have been made, dumb to the conditions as they exist and blind to the results—declining production

and declining population on the farms and in the country areas generally—and the most the Government can do is to bring forward a regulation of this kind, notwithstanding the specific assurances given in another place that the money would be advanced under certain terms and conditions. In spite of those assurances, the Government now turns round and repudiates one of those conditions by promulgating this regulation.

The Chief Secretary: There is no repudiation whatever.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: Specific assurances were given in another place and were contained in the form that applicants for assistance were required to sign. It was quoted here last year when a similar regulation was disallowed, but I shall quote it again in view of the Minister's statement in order to refresh the minds of members. The Minister told us that he had no knowledge of the existence of much opposition to the regulation. Country members have. As Mr. Cornell explained, possibly neither the Minister nor the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank have any knowledge of the hostility to the Government's action in this matter, because the farmer has reached the stage when he realises the hopelessness of appealing from Caesar to Caesar.

We are passing through a very anxious time and are looking forward to big demands being made on farmers in the near future to increase production of certain lines, but this is the sort of encouragement they are receiving. I am afraid that unless there is a change of spirit on the part of the Government, much of the appeal will fall on deaf ears, deaf not through any lack of loyalty or lack of desire to help the country, but deaf because they realise that in the past advantage has been taken of them and they are not prepared to run a similar risk again. As to the assurance given to the farmers on the document they signed, a small slip was attached to one of the original I.A.B. application forms containing the words:—

All concessions in connection with the interest rates and terms of repayment will be granted on this application when the Commonwealth conditions are known.

Apart from the interest, a Commonwealth condition was that for the first three years there would be no repayment of the principal sum advanced, and this regulation cuts right across that condition.

The Premier, when discussing the matter in another place, made several references to the conditions, one of which was:—

The principle on which we propose to deal with this money is that the State will accept responsibility for all the administration costs, and whatever terms we get from the Commonwealth Government in the shape of interest rebate or cheap money will be passed on to the farmers. For instance, the Commonwealth Government has said that it will not charge the State Governments any interest on the money for the first 12 months. We propose to hand that benefit to the farmers. Any farmer who receives drought relief money this year will pay no interest whatever on it for this year. If a farmer can get out of debt and repay it some day, all the better.

There was no suggestion that the farmer would be made to repay it in the first year. I am quoting from "Hansard," page 2278. Similar statements will be found also on pages 2378 and 2381.

The Chief Secretary: You do not suggest that those conditions do not apply?

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I do suggest that they are not applying under this regulation. We were given a specific assurance that there would be no repayments for three years and now the Government brings down a regulation providing for repayment, where the Commissioners are satisfied it can be made, within 12 months.

The Chief Secretary: Who gave the assurance that there would be no repayment for three years?

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: It seems that I shall have to quote further statements made by the Premier for the information of the Chief Secretary. It is generally conceded that the Commonwealth money was lent to the State on condition that the Commonwealth would pay all the interest rates for the first year and half the interest rates for the balance of the term of the loan, which was for seven years, and that there would be no repayment of the principal amount for the first three years. I assume that the Minister will agree with that. Right through the debate on this legislation in another place, the assurance was given that the terms and conditions obtained from the Commonwealth would be conceded to the farmers. When the Chief Secretary asks who gave the assurance, I reply that there is sufficient evidence in "Hansard" and in the form the farmers were asked to sign to show that that was a definite term of the contract.

I have received complaints from various parts of my electorate about the attitude of the Government and the effect on both the farmers and the people doing business with them. I have a letter dated the 10th March from the Katanning Chamber of Commerce as follows:—

At a meeting of this Chamber held this week the matter of the hardship that has been inflicted on wheatgrowers (particularly Agricultural Bank clients) by the action of the Bank in seizing the whole of last year's drought relief advance from the proceeds of this year's harvest was discussed.

It was pointed out that when this advance was made last year, the terms of repayment were to cover a period of seven years, the first to be free of interest, with a charge of 2 per cent. on the balance. The Bank has now seized the whole of the advance from this year's harvest and has added insult to injury by offering to re-advance the money, but only under I.A.B. conditions, a direct contradiction of the conditions of repayment put forward by the Government at the time of the advance.

This Chamber feels that the Government, in acting in this way against a section of the community already hard-pressed, has committed what could almost be considered a sharp practice, and would be glad if you could use your utmost endeavours to obtain some form of relief on their behalf.

The Chief Secretary: Have you submitted that letter to the Agricultural Bank?

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I have not. Most of the cases mentioned have been referred to the Bank. This House has a perfect right to maintain its attitude towards the regulations that were disallowed earlier in the session and have been reintroduced with a slight alteration. The Government is not altogether fair to this House in reintroducing the regulations in the same session and expecting members to approve of them in the form in which they are presented. The only alteration made is to paragraph (4). I shall not delay the House by reading the regulation disallowed, but I shall read the regulation as altered, so that members will understand that no one, except the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank, is being considered. The regulation reads—

When for the purpose of paragraph (3) of this regulation the Commissioners are considering whether or not, after repayment in full of the advances or moneys owing by the borrower, the balance of the proceeds derived by the borrower from his operation aforesaid are sufficient to enable him to carry on his said operations during the next ensuing season—

What follows is the part that was altered—
—interest owing to creditors of the borrower other than the Commissioners, and payments in respect of machinery or plant owing by the borrower to persons other than the Commissioners, shall not be taken into account as being expenses incidental to the carrying on of his said operations by the borrower.

This House must disallow these regulations because they are unfair to the farmer and unfair to the people who, in good faith and on the assurances that were given, are doing business with the farmer, and because they are causing the morale of the farmers to become lower and lower. I support the motion.

HON. H. V. PIESSE (South-East) [12.3]: It had not been my intention to speak on this matter, because both my colleagues put forward an excellent case; but, having listened to the Chief Secretary this morning, I consider some explanation is due for my having interjected while he was addressing the House. The Chief Secretary said that the farmers were repaying in a voluntary manner, but he knows just as well as I do that the farmers do not handle a single penny of this money. It is all paid to the Agricultural Bank, which in turn pays out to the farmers what it considers to be the correct amount after it has gone into the facts of each case.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: Did the farmers protest?

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: Come to my office in Katanning on any Friday afternoon and see the farmers there! I can assure the hon. member they do protest. I often have as many as ten farmers in my office on a Friday afternoon. Mr. Watts, further up the street, may have a considerably larger number. They are protesting! Their one life-long job is protesting. Any country member of Parliament, particularly those connected with the wheatgrowing industry and stock, and interested in outback properties in districts such as Nyabing and Pingrup, must know that the farmers are protesting. Let the hon. member ask the question of those members who represent districts such as I have mentioned.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: But I am asking you.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: I have given the answer. I am pleased that Mr. Roche read the letter from the Chamber of Commerce

at Katanning. That body is comprised of business men who take a keen interest in the affairs of the farmer, because, when all is said and done, their success is the farmer's success, and vice versa. The business people of Katanning are dependent upon the success of the farming community. They know what is taking place, because they are the people who have advanced money to the farmer without security. They have sold the farmers tractors and farming machinery on credit. Of course, they are not singular in this respect, because the same thing applies throughout our country districts. Under these regulations, the Agricultural Bank will not permit the farmer to make payments to these business people. How would a crop be produced were it not that this machinery had been supplied to the farmer? How could he put in his crop? How would the Agricultural Bank get on for its interest if this machinery had not been supplied by the merchants? I shall read some notes that were handed to me by a man who had congratulated Mr. Thomson on the splendid effort he made here in December last with regard to this regulation. That man had read "Hansard" carefully. As Mr. Thomson is ill, the man thought it only right that he should pass the notes on to me. He said he hoped they would be of some use to me if I got the opportunity to debate the matter again in the House. He says—

I am not the only one in this sort of position in this district. I know of one who has paid off his drought relief advance and will not re-apply, and another who was told that his sheep should be sufficient to carry him on. This latter case involved repayment of approximately £150. As far as I am concerned, I would not take any further assistance of this character under any consideration. If I have not made things quite clear for you, will you please let me know, and I will be happy to do what I can.

This man had obtained an advance from the Agricultural Bank and had carried on in the same way as had many other farmers. When these farmers were up against it on account of the drought conditions, they were delighted to learn that they would have an opportunity to obtain financial relief. Little did they know, when they signed for the advance, that they were really placing themselves under the I.A.B. The farmer's statement continues—

On my first visit to the Agricultural Bank after finishing harvesting and delivering my wheat, the only satisfaction I got was that

drought relief would probably be refunded if applied for, and that I should see my stock firm to ascertain the amount of finance that would be available for carrying on this season. As I knew, approximately, the amount I could obtain on my sheep . . .

He then sets out his schedule, which I do not intend to read to the House. The amount he required was £350 10s. He had a Sunder seeder to be paid for out of surplus wool funds, and had to pay £10 to the Agricultural Bank. He goes on to say—

By the next mail I received the year's approval from the Agricultural Bank, which was very different from the one drawn up by the Bank's inspector.

His application was reduced from £350 to £282 10s. This is the part I wish to emphasise—

The acceptance of this programme would require that I make over my wheat scrip for 1941-42 for 500 (over) bags to the Agricultural Bank, and also retention money held on wool, and also any further payment received on wool; this latter condition referring to wool was not on paper but was stated to me by the local manager of the bank at a later interview. Also, it was a condition that (I quote from the Bank's approval form): "No further finance will be arranged and the allowances approved are subject to reduction if circumstances warrant it."

That is the generous method by which the Agricultural Bank Commissioners, through their officers, are dealing with these applications. The man's signature is at the foot of the letter, but I do not propose to mention his name to the House. The Chief Secretary, if he so desires, may inspect the letter, which continues—

Again I interviewed the Agricultural Bank, and saw the local manager this time, and told him that I could not agree to the Bank's programme; firstly, it was distinctly different from the programme drawn up by the Bank's inspector, and I had made arrangements with my stock firm on the previous proposal; and, secondly, the conditions laid down by the Bank certainly did not appeal to me.

The Bank manager then told him that he would re-submit the case, because, in his opinion, a misunderstanding had taken place. The letter continues—

In fairness to the local manager, I must say he offered, as I had apparently been misled by one of the Bank's staff, to submit the original programme to the Commissioners for re-consideration. As the biggest objection I had to the whole business was the fact that the bank has caused me to break faith with the firm in question, I refused to accept any refund of drought relief money, and I paid the bank the amount necessary to clear off the interest and drought relief. I obtained his

assurance that he would immediately approve of the following programme to be financed on the stock account from Dalgety & Co.

The programme approved on that occasion was for an advance of £221; the amount gets smaller each time, but that was the sum originally approved by the Agricultural Bank. He continues—

Up to date I have heard nothing further, but I am living in hope, even if . . . In any case I am free of the Bank, except for meeting my interest next year; and, if ever you hear of me taking any other relief, you are quite at liberty to call me nasty names. On the final reckoning, it took all my wheat, plus £10, to satisfy the Agricultural Bank's claims and one bale of cornsacks. A splendid performance, I don't think!

Is that the letter of a satisfied man? His farm is in the Nyabing district. The road board in that district circularised every member representing the eastern and southern districts setting out the facts of these cases. Then we have the Minister standing on his feet in this Chamber and telling members of the way in which the Agricultural Bank deals with the primary producers. If ever the Minister spoke with his tongue in his cheek he did so on this occasion, because he well knows what the position is. The farmer whose letter I quoted is a trained business man and an engineer—he typed his letter and made a good job of it. He could, if he so desired, walk off his farm tomorrow and obtain work in Perth. If he did so, his farm would in the course of two or three years revert to nature. That would be a loss to the State, because farmers today are being asked to continue their operations. These men are up against all sorts of difficulties, and yet we have the Chief Secretary telling us what a splendid deal they are getting from the Agricultural Bank and its officers.

The Chief Secretary: I would like to get an opportunity to read that letter.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: There is no need for me to say more on the motion.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East—in reply) [12.19]: I shall not detain the House very long in replying. I was sorry to hear the Chief Secretary belittle my case on account of its brevity. I said definitely yesterday that, as this matter had been so fully debated last year, I would put my case as succinctly as possible. Later on in his remarks the Chief Secretary insinuated that I was talking all round the matter. First he accuses me of being too brief and later

of talking all round the matter. I ask members who talked all round the matter, the Chief Secretary or I? The Chief Secretary did touch upon many matters which had nothing to do with the case I put up. He spoke about the delay. We are not concerned about the delay in promulgating the regulations; that does not come into the picture at all. Our case is mainly that these farmers who received drought relief were brought under the I.A.B. and were asked to repay the whole amount at once after having been assured that they would have six years within which to pay it. The Chief Secretary had something to say about Mr. Anthony, whom I quoted; but the Chief Secretary did not take me to task for quoting what the Premier said. I ask members whether this is a breach of contract or not. The Premier said:—

Regulations will then be passed providing that in connection with the amount of £570,000 to be issued this year as drought relief, no interest will be charged to the farmers for the first year, and only half interest will be charged for the next six years.

If there is not an implication that this money could be refunded over a period, I do not know what it is. Then we have a regulation which gives the Commissioners power to grab all the money in the first year. I venture to say the Commissioners do not know the circumstances of the farmers. They say, "You have a good crop, and you must give us all the money back." The result is that the farmers are embarrassed for the next year and the year after through having had to make so large a repayment. On the Chief Secretary's own admission, these farmers have paid back a lot of the money. As a matter of fact, they have been made to pay it back. It has been implied that a lot of the money will not be refunded, and the taxpayers will have to pay it, but I do not think they will. Our quarrel is that the privilege of having six years in which to repay the money has been taken from these farmers. I believe it will practically all be paid back. A few may not meet the obligation, but the percentage will be very small indeed.

The Chief Secretary: I wish I could believe that.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Mr. Cornell said that if the responsibility for finding all the money was thrown back on the taxpayers, it would not matter very much, but I do not think that very much will be thrown

back on the taxpayers, if the farmers are given a chance. If, however, they are asked to pay the lot back at once, they will be embarrassed, and will have to return to I.A.B. conditions, as Mr. Piesse said, in regard to interest and other things.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Not in regard to interest.

The Chief Secretary: That is not in accordance with the facts.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I am sorry if I made a mistake in regard to the interest position, but they will have to come under the I.A.B. for everything else. Everything will go into the melting pot and the I.A.B. will have a lien over everything. That is indicated by the letter which Mr. Piesse read. We are not speaking of things that do not happen. By interjection Mr. Macfarlane asked, "Are they satisfied?" I agree with what Mr. Cornell said, that people in the country have lost heart, and do not bother. The Chief Secretary said there had been no complaints. That is because many people, knowing the conditions, did not apply for this money. I know many who would not apply though they desperately needed the advance. They were not prepared to be placed under the I.A.B. to get it.

There has definitely been a breach of contract. I read yesterday what the Premier said, and that was enough. I am sorry the Chief Secretary did not have some excuse to make for the Premier's remarks. He was able to quote something by Mr. Anthony, but not by the Premier. A regulation was disallowed by the Legislative Council last November, and a fresh regulation in almost similar terms should not have been gazetted on the 15th February. The legality of the action has been questioned. I consider that it was definitely questionable. I read both regulations and there was only a small alteration in the second one which was gazetted. I do not think anything has happened to alter the views of members of this Chamber on the subject, or to induce them to change their vote. I expect them to agree that a definite contract has been broken and that the wishes of this Chamber have been flouted. Of course, the Government did not know we would be sitting again this month when that regulation was gazetted. In that regard, the Government made a little slip. It did not think there would be another sitting until August.

The Chief Secretary: That is a most unfair statement.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I say that perhaps the Government did not know.

The Chief Secretary: I think you should withdraw that statement.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: If it is distasteful to the Chief Secretary, I will withdraw, but I repeat that it was very questionable for the Government to introduce a regulation similar to one already disallowed by the Council. I hope the House will agree to the motion.

The Chief Secretary: We must have a regulation.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Then have a decent one that will suit everybody. Have one that will not be a breach of contract.

Question put and passed.

MOTION—PRINTING MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

As to State's War Effort.

Debate resumed from the previous day on the following motion by the Chief Secretary—

That the Ministerial Statement be printed.

HON. E. M. HEENAN (North-East) [12.22]: I agree with other members that this meeting of Parliament was warranted and that the proceedings have justified it. At a time like this when our country is engaged in a vital struggle for life many people argue that State Parliaments have no useful function and that they should cease to exist. I am inclined to think that a session such as this does something to refute that idea and that in that respect the calling of Parliament on this occasion has been justified. I listened with interest to the Chief Secretary's comprehensive statement of the Government's actions in recent months, and I am convinced that the various Ministers have been doing a very good job.

Events have happened with startling rapidity and, for the first time in our history as a nation, we are faced with the imminent prospect of an invasion. It is very encouraging to learn from the Chief Secretary that the position of Australia's defence has been much improved and that if there is no reason for undue optimism, at the same time there is no cause for undue pessimism. I can only express the hope that

conditions will improve in our favour and that during the critical months that lie ahead we will have more cause for optimism than exists at present. In that respect, I feel certain that all members will agree with me when I pay a tribute to our Prime Minister for the excellent job he is doing in this hour of Australia's greatest peril.

As a goldfields member, I am deeply concerned about the uncertain position of the mining industry. During recent weeks I have been continually asked what policy is to be pursued but I have not been in a position to answer that query and apparently at the present time nobody else is in a position to do so. I think I can say with confidence that the attitude of the goldfields people is that they are prepared for and are even anxious to endure any sacrifice reasonably required or demanded of them in the interests of Australia. No community is more willing to take its full share of responsibility for the war effort. Goldfields young men have enlisted in their thousands; the people have contributed more than their quota to war loans; active V.D.C. units have been formed in practically every centre of importance; and A.R.P. workers and other bodies are doing splendid jobs.

There is a feeling, however, that sometimes the value and the vital importance of the goldmining industry is underestimated. People consider that there is not always a realisation of the fact that it has taken over 40 years of hard work, plus millions of cash and a vast amount of scientific research and knowledge to bring the industry to its present peak. The fact that the industry has already produced gold to the value of £250,000,000 is sometimes forgotten as is the fact that at present it is producing gold of an annual value of about £12,000,000. Again, there is in Kalgoorlie and Boulder alone a population of approximately 24,000 people directly dependent on the industry for a livelihood, to say nothing of the populations in such places as Norseman, Coolgardie, Leonora, Laverton, Wiluna and elsewhere. Any policy which directly affects the existence of those places must, of course, be most carefully considered.

I realise that at a time like this first things must come first and that the paramount task now is to mobilise the manpower of the whole of Australia in order to repel the enemy. At the same time it would be unwise not to have an eye to the future and not to lay plans for the time when peace is

declared and the mining industry again takes its vital place as one of the most important industries in the Commonwealth. It is in this respect that the greatest care must be taken with the industry. If some mines are forced to close whole communities will disappear. It must be carefully considered whether such a result can be avoided, especially in towns which depend on one mine for their existence. I am quite conscious of the fact that the Government of Western Australia is deeply concerned with this problem and is giving it most careful consideration. I am sure the same remarks apply to the Federal Government, and I am confident that a wise decision will be arrived at after full consideration is given to all the surrounding circumstances.

There has been a failure on the goldfields to date to have the district declared a vital war area. This omission has caused the local governing bodies grave concern because they feel that, should Western Australia be subjected to air raids, the goldfields will be among the first objectives. That viewpoint seems reasonable, in view of the fact that there is a very important aerodrome at Kalgoorlie. That centre is also the terminus of the East-West railway and it is there that that line junctions with the main line to the metropolis. Furthermore, Kalgoorlie depends entirely upon its water supply. If air raid precautions are necessary anywhere, it seems to me they are essential on the goldfields. If the job is worth doing at all, it should be done properly. I hope, therefore, that whatever authority is charged with the responsibility for making the requisite declaration will not hesitate to do so. As I remarked earlier, we have at Kalgoorlie a very active and efficient A.R.P. organisation, the members of which feel that they cannot accomplish their best work because of the failure to declare the goldfields a vital area.

There is one other matter to which I desire to refer and that is the statement by the Chief Secretary to the effect that during the current year Western Australia must produce a far greater quantity of vegetables than formerly. The reason for that is obvious because there must be an influx of many thousands of troops to Western Australia. It is a matter of common knowledge that on the goldfields we have a big camp of internees. That makes the problem of supplies more difficult and it has been particularly acute during recent weeks. I proffer the suggestion that a scheme be

evolved for exploiting vegetable growing on the fields. Quite a number of internees are Italians or Slavs who are very proficient in connection with market gardening, and it seems to me their services could be availed of in that direction. Then, again, we have had a marvellous season in that section of the State. In fact, I have heard it referred to as "the season of a century." The water supplies locally are at present ample and the goldfields soil lends itself particularly to the growth of certain types of vegetables. Those who have partaken of vegetables grown there will agree that no other centre in the world could produce better crops. It seems to me therefore that some scheme should be devised to make the most of these propitious circumstances. Centres like Laverton, Leonora and Menzies have to import vegetable supplies as well as ordinary foodstuffs. The position in respect of the latter is fairly satisfactory except that from time to time the railway service is dislocated consequent upon the depredations caused by heavy rainfall. In such instances, of course, perishable goods are not available.

A suggestion was made to me by the secretary of the Leonora Road Board that a scheme should be formulated for the growing of vegetables in the northern country where the soil is eminently suitable for such production but where the cost of water makes such an undertaking prohibitive. At present the charge is 5s. per 1,000 gallons. Apparently, in all parts of the State ample water supplies are conserved at present, and in view of the serious situation confronting the State for the time being, it seems to me that water should be made available to people at various outlying centres at a minimum cost. Should anything happen to the railway between Perth and Kalgoorlie or to the line stretching from Kalgoorlie to the north, the people in the outlying areas will be deprived of all classes of vegetable goods. Such articles cannot be stored and therefore if a scheme such as I have suggested were to be put in hand, those people could grow their own vegetables and make them independent of what may possibly occur in the near future, but which I sincerely hope will never eventuate. I support the motion

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West)
[12.37]: I wish to add a small contribution to the debate before it concludes and to take the opportunity provided by this special session to express some views I hold regard-

ing one or two matters. It is the paramount duty of members of Parliament as representatives of the people to keep themselves thoroughly acquainted with current happenings and events. In these days of serious crises, I regard it as essential that members of Parliament shall be given all the information that can be safely placed at their disposal. I was struck recently, on perusing a paragraph published in the "West Australian" in which the return of the Premier and the Minister for Lands from the Eastern States was announced, to note that at a meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party the Premier and his colleague had addressed members and informed them of what was being done. If any such announcement or report was to be given on the return of Ministers of the Crown from a visit to the Eastern States, I think Parliament should be entitled to it.

Hon. H. V. Piessé: Quite right.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. W. J. MANN: Parliament should be entitled to the announcement rather than that it should be made to one political party. I do not suggest anything sinister regarding the matter, nor do I suggest that the Premier, for whom I have much admiration, would do or say anything to which members of this Chamber would take exception, but I honestly think that should the Premier go East and on returning feel it incumbent upon him to make a statement regarding his mission, he should make the announcement to Parliament as a whole and not merely to one section.

I hope that Parliament will be called together at given periods. I trust we shall not merely finish up this short session and then not meet again until the ordinary time for sitting in July. If there is anything that we as members of Parliament should know, then I think the Government should be glad to take the opportunity of letting us have the information. Ignorance minimises our individual usefulness whereas the possession of reliable information could help considerably in times such as the present. I welcome the suggestion for the appointment of committees to assist in various activities. There is no monopoly of brain power held by those associated with the Civil Service, from which the personnel of quite a number of committees and boards has been drawn. I think members of Parliament have much ability of which use

could be made and the services of members would gladly be made available to assist in various directions. The Government may bear in mind what the Federal Government has already done and perhaps the Premier and his colleagues will see fit to follow suit.

I shall not make any lengthy reference to the war situation and I make no apology for holding some opinions regarding the prosecution of hostilities so far as the position appeals to me. I do not intend to speak from the standpoint of strategy but from the point of view of staff contribution. It seems to me that there are a great many men walking round in khaki with comparatively soft jobs to carry out and, as one hon. member remarked earlier in the debate, walking from one building to another carrying files and languidly waiting about for action by someone else who never seems to be in any hurry to reach a decision.

During the past few months I have been in some departments and I have been astonished at the number of apparently able-bodied men doing work which, it appeared to me, could well have been done by juniors. I quite realise that experience counts but I do not know that the experience of quite a number of people I know personally in such positions would be of very much value to me if I required assistance. The vacillation and circumlocution that are apparent in some public departments would almost make one weep. That tendency is not confined to Western Australia alone but is Commonwealth wide. If any hon. member wishes to get annoyed and hot under the collar, and to develop the desire to break something, I commend him to read some of the reports that have been issued regarding the Inventions Board established by the Commonwealth. If there is one episode that stands out as more outrageous than any other, it is that relating to the Owen gun. In view of the difficulties created, the neglect to take action, the refusal to listen to qualified men, and the evasion that went on in respect of that matter, one wonders whether the people concerned are paid to look after the interests of the nation or those of someone else.

It is a shocking state of affairs. I noticed in this morning's paper a good article by one of the correspondents with our forces overseas. He makes a reference to present-day prophets being "tuppence a dozen." I myself do not wish to be a prophet. I do

not know whether I would pay tuppence a dozen for prophets or not. However, I want to say, without disseminating an atmosphere of gloom, that I fully concur in most of what that correspondent wrote about the possibilities of invasion of Australia. To me it seems most extraordinary, as I go up and down the country, particularly where one is not known and often gets into second-class carriages and meets all sorts of people, thus listening to quite a deal of comment on current affairs that otherwise one would not have the opportunity of hearing, to observe the number of men of mature years who adopt the role of prophet and who want to tell their listeners that they happen to know there is no chance of Australia ever being invaded, that the Japanese are going to do this and that and the other thing; and then the prophet sets out to tell why it is so. I read a bit, and I have lately read quite a lot of comparatively recent history of Japan, Australia and Britain. As one reads what has happened, especially within the last four or five years, one can come to only one conclusion, that unless the Japanese are definitely stopped elsewhere, they are as surely as night follows day coming to take Australia.

Hon. C. B. Williams: They are going to try.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Yes, it can be put that way. But in the opinion of the Japanese, they are going to take Australia. I have formed the belief that for a great many years Japanese opinion was highly favourable to Great Britain. I do not know that even up to three or four years ago the Japanese were strongly antagonistic to us. Certainly in their Greater Asia policy they were determined to eliminate British influence from the Pacific Ocean as far as possible, more especially in the vicinity of Japan; but generally they had no great antipathy towards us, so far as I can judge. Japanese antipathy was chiefly directed at America. It was only when America displayed a more lively interest in the present war, that the Japanese began to change their opinion as regards Great Britain. I date the change of Japanese opinion regarding Australia, more especially, from the period of the United States-Canada defence agreement and the United States making 50 destroyers available to Great Britain in exchange for the full and free use of British bases in the ocean in which Japan is in-

terested. Until then we had not a great deal to fear.

It is a fact, however, that after the conclusion of the first world war Britain, as a result of Australian pressure, terminated its then-existing pact with Japan. That rankled in the Japanese mind for a long time. However, there were other factors. The Japanese wanted our trade, and we wanted their trade. The Japanese were especially interested in getting our wool, and they have been highly valuable clients of Australia. The antipathy to Japan that brought about the termination of the agreement existing at the conclusion of the last war was forgotten, and to an extent it disappeared. When we began to lose our Continental markets, our people realised that they had to sell their wool somewhere, and big business interests, especially in the Eastern States, were glad to cultivate Japanese goodwill. In about June, 1940, so keen was Canberra to retain the good graces of Japan that it exerted all its pressure to compel London to compromise with Japan on the Burma Road issue.

We have been trying to have it both ways. We have been trying to hold on to Japanese trade, and we have been trying to be loyal to the Mother Country. For that reason we have landed ourselves in a position where there are sure to be, if Japan can have its way, repercussions. Had not the war deprived us of European markets, the position would have been quite different. Australia could have afforded to carry on and take no notice of the Nipponese. However, our business people then considered Japanese goodwill essential. Now, one cannot make people believe that one is their friend and wants to trade with them, and one cannot exert influence on their behalf, and later on turn them down definitely without having to pay some sort of price. Right up to the formation of the Prince Konoye Government, the Japanese appeared to me, from what I could gather, to be very hopeful of continuing good relations with Australia. Whether the Japanese were prepared to permit us to remain in the state of peace and goodwill with them that existed at that time, I am not prepared to say; but it is a fact that one of the first actions of the Konoye Government was to approach the Australian Government and urge it to accord a reasonable and sympathetic view to Japanese aspirations and ideas, especially as affecting the Pacific.

I could, if necessary, quote at length on this subject; but I will only give the House a few lines of a statement made by Prince Konoye with the object of promoting what he called international goodwill. The message I referred to was sent by the Premier of Japan to the Prime Minister of Australia, and it reads—

With the world divided into two opposite camps, international cultural understanding is the way to lasting peace and coming prosperity Australia and Japan, two vital dynamic countries in the Pacific, can do much to foster these causes.

[Sitting suspended from 1 to 2.15 p.m.]

Hon. W. J. MANN: Before lunch I was referring to the fact that the Japanese Government, previous to the one now in existence, had made efforts to bring about better goodwill between Australia and Japan, and I quoted the message that was sent on that occasion. It will be recollected that immediately after that there was silence in this country. I think Japan realised then that events had taken a different turn in Australia, and that as a result of our enemy allying itself with the Axis Powers, Australia could not be counted upon any longer for a continuance of friendly relations. About that time Australia decided to send a representative to Tokio, and Sir John Latham was appointed to the position. A considerable time elapsed before Sir John went to Japan. During that period I believe the final attempts to swing Australia back to Japanese ideas were made. Shortly after that the Japanese Government adopted a new attitude. It began to threaten us with repercussions if we persisted in showing an attitude of hostility.

The fact that Australian airmen were being trained in America was something else which annoyed the Japanese. They realised that in June, 1940, the Mother Country was being pressed for an attitude of appeasement in one direction, but two months later there was such a change as to convince Japan that it would have to include Australia in the list of its enemies. Seeing that we spurned Japan's efforts and refused to co-operate with her, I contend that it is only reasonable to expect that the Japs will, if given the opportunity, attack this country. I have been annoyed and disgusted to hear some of our own people endeavouring to persuade the country that we had nothing to fear, and that our attitude to-

wards the war was a result of a jittery feeling in certain governmental quarters. I heard that very expression used not long ago in a railway carriage by an educated man who should have known better. We shall have to do all we can in our war effort, to accelerate it in every possible way, and show Japan that although we number only one-fourteenth part of her population we are capable of hitting back to a much greater degree than is any other country she has tackled so far.

We all welcome our American cousins. That is perhaps a hackneyed term, but there is something to be said in using it. We are mostly of the same stock; we have very much the same cultural ideas, and in almost every way we are akin to the Americans. The fact that Japan allied herself with Germany and Italy should in itself have been sufficient to let that country realise that it could not count upon us in any way. Australia has made a wonderful war effort up-to-date. Some factories have been working long hours and applying themselves most diligently to making Australia ready to defend itself. They have achieved results which would never have been thought possible a few years ago. At the same time I am sorry to know that in one part of Australia strikes have been taking place. Fortunately this State is fairly free of industrial disturbances of that kind.

We read in yesterday's paper that a new regulation had been framed to deal with subversive elements. I hope the Federal Government will be strong enough and determined enough to see that the regulation is properly carried out. No persuasion in the world will make me believe that those who are behind these hold-ups and strikes that are taking place in New South Wales are not being disloyal to this country. The proper thing in my estimation is not to treat them in a kid-glove fashion. Other countries have stronger methods of dealing with the traitorous element, to which some people may be said to belong. They are few in number, but are sufficient to make very serious inroads into the war effort and to cause most serious results to the even flow of the great task ahead of us. If an example were made of some of these persons it would probably be all for the best.

I wish to speak now about employment. I do not know what happens in other parts of the State, because most of my travels recently

have been through my own province. I have noticed in various centres a number of able-bodied men of alien origin. Some of them are naturalised but that may not be so in the case of others. These men always seem to look prosperous but do not appear to apply themselves to any particular class of work, neither do they seem to be contributing to the national effort in connection with the war. I spoke on this matter when dealing with the Potato Growers Licensing Bill last year. I understand that a number of these men carry on by hiring land from farmers and putting in potato crops. There is apparently a shortage of potatoes just now. When it is possible to do so these men hire the land, of which they are good judges, and generally select the best land. They frequently get hold of people who do not realise that they are aiding and abetting the aliens. One man this week told me that a party had endeavoured to persuade him to lease a part of his property for the growing of potatoes. I do not know what the position is with the Army, but I presume all these men are tabbed and their whereabouts recorded.

The Honorary Minister: They are registered.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I presume they are all registered, whether naturalised or not. I cannot understand why these young fellows, ranging as they do between 20 and 40 years of age, are not put to some use, and why they are not absorbed into the Army. If the explanation why they are not in the Army is that they cannot be depended upon, that is all the more reason why steps should be taken to utilise them in some other way. Yesterday I received a letter from the chairman of the Marybrook Potato Association. A meeting had been held to discuss labour for the putting in and taking off of the coming potato crop. Most of the young men in that district have already enlisted, and the fathers and mothers are endeavouring to carry on. Some of the settlers are milking a few cows, and others are growing a few potatoes. They feel they will not be able to carry on this year unless they are assured of labour.

The people of alien birth to whom I am referring should be called up. If it is not thought advisable to put them in the Army, they should be drafted into companies to produce vegetables—potatoes and other things—and also into the fruitgrowing and dairying industries.

They should be put on to food-producing jobs, and given the same pay and conditions as soldiers, and no more. If the prospect for potato prices were not extremely good and returns much higher than those reached in normal times assured, these people would not be seen. They are determined to remain in the country and do this work and receive the cream of the prices, while our own young men who would normally be doing it are away, or in training in an endeavour to keep this country for us and for them too. If that is the position, the authorities should see that all these men are put to work in a proper manner.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: On a reasonable salary.

Hon. W. J. MANN: At no higher rate than the soldiers. They are not entitled to any more.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: They are claiming a minimum of over £1 a day now.

Hon. W. J. MANN: One farmer told me of instances where these men have been asked to assist in some work and they have demanded as high as £1 a day.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: That is the minimum!

Hon. W. J. MANN: Many of the boys away fighting hardly got £1 a week for many years, much less £1 a day. There is no equality of sacrifice here; the people of whom I complain are sacrificing nothing. Some of them have land. Those who have been in the country for a long time own their own farms. They lease their land to others. There are, however, many people who will not lease land. Even if they did, they should be prevented. If these men will not make some move to assist in the war effort, they should be forced to do so.

The Chief Secretary: You suggested employing them under military conditions.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Yes.

The Chief Secretary: On private land?

Hon. W. J. MANN: That is a question to be decided later. Private land would need to be utilised. The problem of clearing would arise in connection with Crown lands. There are no empty farms in the part of the country from which I come. It is very rare indeed to find an empty farm today in the group settlements. Where, a few years ago, there were 100 empty farms, today they are all in good working condition.

Somebody suggested to me the other day that I might take a trip through the South-

West and urge the farmers to grow vegetables. I said, "If you want to see the end of me, shoot me now because if I put that proposition to some of my constituents, I would be in danger of meeting with a violent death." Whilst they are having a tremendous struggle to keep their places together, anyone putting such a scheme to them would receive a hostile reception. It is not that they do not want to help; they do, but it is not possible. We must regiment all the labour we can, and what I have suggested is one of the ways in which we could use these people to advantage.

HON. J. M. MACFARLANE (Metropolitan-Suburban) [2.37]: I support the motion. I am also in agreement with those members who expressed themselves as being gratified that the Government is holding this short session. I have been advocating it for quite a while, and the public generally has been looking forward to such a turn in political events to reassure the people, in some instances, and for other reasons to indicate that Parliamentarians constitute an active body. I congratulate the Government on convening this session. I hope another will be held before we resume our usual annual session. With the present war atmosphere, another meeting would be advisable. The public has gone through the nervous condition of evacuation, black-outs, brown-outs, and block-outs, and it is quite natural that they want confidence restored.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Particularly since the hotels have closed at 6 p.m.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: In this respect I am in accord with what Sir Hal Colebatch said in regard to the black-out or block-out of the city. The question arises of turning the city into a very drab place as a trading centre. Sir Hal stated that wire, both inside and outside windows in other countries had proved effective and made it possible for business people to carry on with the exhibition of goods in the usual way. I am positive it would be satisfactory to block-out in the present way the universal stores, where people enter them and have an opportunity of looking around to make their choice before purchasing.

When it comes to the question of lock-up shops selling vegetables and perishable foods, a great disservice is rendered to the public because here the buyer is unable to

view what he wants to purchase. The wiring of windows on both sides seems to be the sensible thing to do, rather than to have a general order that all glass must be removed in a particular centre. The public are accepting the conditions in the true sporting spirit, and it is possible to carry on, but it will be at great loss to many small shopkeepers, and will very likely end with the bankruptcy of some of them. I feel that the civil defence personnel, air raid wardens and others who have had to control these matters have probably got a bit of the jitters themselves and have evolved extreme regulations which are perhaps regrettable; but we have to submit to them, and we do so loyally for the common good. There could be a relaxation of many of these regulations which would make for better working conditions, and nobody would kick against them.

What interested me most was the statement made by the Chief Secretary in regard to foodstuffs and what the position would be in the coming few months; and what suggestions we could put to him that would be of some use to him and the Government. I am deeply concerned with the shortage of beef. Usually at this time of the year a shortage of beef occurs. It is supplemented by supplies from Wyndham and the North-West, but they are not available this year. The position is rendered doubly acute by the presence of Americans here in fairly large numbers. They are beef-eaters rather than mutton eaters, I understand.

In any scheme we devise to augment supplies of beef we shall have to look to the quick producing lines. In this respect we shall have to look especially to veal, pork, lamb, poultry and ducks. These are quick producers, maturing for market in periods varying from a few weeks to a few months. They will just about fill in the period when meat will be short. If we concentrate on these lines we shall perhaps be less inconvenienced from the want of foodstuffs than appears from the Minister's statement. It is well known that many cow keepers destroy their calves at birth rather than keep them for a few days or weeks and market them as veal. Those producers ought to change their practice and market veal, which would provide one line of meat to help fill the shortage of beef.

Hon. W. J. Mann: That applies in the metropolitan area.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: It occurs on dairy farms all over the place. The raising of pigs can be increased and made available as a foodstuff quickly, because pork is marketable within four or five months. Wheat is being held in the State to the extent of millions of bushels, because there are no facilities for shipping it abroad, and I think some of it could be used to produce pork in this time of shortage. Lamb will also provide some relief for the beef shortage. All these lines could be augmented considerably in the certain knowledge that they will be in demand and will minimise the shortage of beef.

Hon. L. Craig: What do you suggest the Government can do?

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: I will come to that. In regard to poultry raising, during the last few years the male birds have been destroyed owing to the practice of sexing, but these birds should now be reared for market. From the poultryman's point of view, sexing has been successful, but now that we require foodstuffs, the birds should be reared. The number killed in past years on account of their being males has been very large, and if they were reared, they would help to overcome the meat shortage.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Would not that restrict the production of eggs?

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: There is no reason why it should. The female birds, if reared in large numbers, will be very useful for supplying eggs, which are short today and will be shorter right through the period owing to the increase of population. If there is an excess of egg production, we have a plant to dry the surplus and prevent any loss occurring. A hen, after being kept for laying for a year or two years, makes a fine table bird and a good food as a change from meat. That again would help to meet the shortage of meat. Muscovy ducks can be marketed in their prime in 12 to 16 weeks, ducks weighing 3 to 3½ lbs. and drakes 5 to 6½ lbs. dressed weight. If they were raised in large numbers, they would contribute substantially to the food requirements of the people.

All this possible increase of production depends entirely upon manpower being made available and the price to be paid for the produce. The most important point for the Government to consider is that of providing manpower. I agree with Mr. Mann's sug-

gestion for using the foreigners, who are almost subversive, and there is no reason why internees should not be required to do something towards the common effort. To keep prices too low will defeat the object in view. The Price Fixing Commissioner desires to keep prices down as much as possible in the interests of the consumer, but by so doing he is not always serving the consumer, because the lines required will not be produced if the raising of them is unprofitable. A profitable price to the producer must be arranged and a proper understanding must be arrived at with the producers so that the business will work out to the common good. This will have to be done in collaboration with the Price Fixing Commissioner.

There are many poultry areas in the metropolitan area fully equipped for re-establishment. They are doing nothing at present because the labour required to work them has passed into the Army and there are insufficient hands available to carry on the work. When we have the knowledge that something must be done to mend matters, it would be a pity if the element that is available cannot be conscripted for this class of work so that our efforts will be successful.

It was very comforting to hear the proposal of the Minister for Agriculture to increase the production of condensed milk from 1¼ million to 2½ million gallons a year, though I am afraid it will be very difficult to carry out and at the same time maintain the necessary supplies of whole milk and butter. I feel that, given full co-operation of effort and an increase of manpower on the farms, this should be possible. The Metropolitan Milk Act could well be overhauled, because it does more to retard the increase of herds than anything else I know of, and a system of equalisation substituted for the quota method. I believe that a transition from the quota system to equalisation and registering growers would perhaps bring about the desired result without any interference with the operation of the Act, and would give the producers a chance to increase their herds and lead to the extra production of milk that will be required if the needs of the State are to be met. We have the power to do these things for ourselves, provided these industries are regimented and worked on sound lines, but we cannot be successful without the support of the Government in regard to manpower.

Hon. G. B. Wood: And the support of the Price Fixing Commissioner.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: That is so.

Hon. G. B. Wood: He is the bugbear.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: The support of both should be obtained at the same time, but without it we shall be in a very bad way in the near future. During the 1914-18 war, when interstate shipping space was short, the Commonwealth Navigation Act was suspended. I do not know whether it has been suspended on this occasion, though the lack of shipping is much worse. I cannot see why provision should not be made, by suspending the Navigation Act or under National Security Regulations, so that any ship calling here could bring produce to this State.

Hon. L. Craig: I think that could be done so long as you could get the ship.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: I am informed that there are 7,000 cases of butter on the water or due to arrive shortly, but we do not know what ship is bringing it, or whether it is being carried in the refrigerator or as ordinary cargo. If it is being brought by one of the boats that calls at almost every inlet between Sydney and Fremantle, it will take a long time to reach us. When shipments are being made from the Eastern States to England, some space could possibly be utilised to carry perishable food-stuffs from Eastern Australia to this State. This could probably be organised by Governments in co-operation with the merchants and would be one step towards assuring the public that the goods it needs will be available.

I believe that production can be so regimented as to give useful results from the point of view of the farmers as well as that of the consumers, provided arrangements are made for the requisite labour. I regret to note that work on the Stirling reservoir has been suspended owing to the necessity for the Works Department undertaking defence work for the Commonwealth. I regard irrigation in the South-West as one of the most important factors in peace time and it is even more important in war time. We have to look to the raising of increased supplies to maintain a large population. This postulates that if we can take advantage of the position at the moment, we might, when the war ends, be able to retain some of our export business. The work on that reservoir should be pushed ahead in order to increase the irrigation areas and permit of

potatoes and other vegetables, which are required in much greater quantities, being produced in an area so favourable for the purpose.

Once again I congratulate the Government and ourselves upon the fact that we are having this short session. It will reassure even the least informed of the public—and the public are our masters—that we are alive to the interests of our own State and those matters which are facing us in this time of peril. I have pleasure in supporting the motion.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [3.1]: I understand this sitting has been called at the request of several members in order that the Government might make a statement on the efforts it has made in connection with the war, and also to give members an opportunity to proffer criticism of that effort, should criticism be deserved and helpful, and further to give members an opportunity to point out what, in their mind, the Government ought to do to make things better. I shall endeavour to confine my remarks almost entirely to matters connected with the war effort. I will not deal at length with those subjects that have already been debated by other members who are more capable than I of dealing with them.

The liquor question has been touched upon by many members. All I would like to say upon it is that I am glad to see the tremendous change that is apparent since the Government took action. The criticism I have to offer is that the Government should not have waited until public opinion forced it to act: it should have led in the matter long ago. I have never before in my life felt a little ashamed of being an Australian, but I have during the last two or three months. I have seen a lot of the drinking that has taken place, especially on trains, because I spend much of my time travelling. The drunkenness on trains was due almost entirely to the sale of bottled beer at railway stations: the men did not drink at the sidings. They bought bottled beer and their behaviour was more than disgusting in many cases. Undoubtedly, we are a crude, primitive, somewhat ill-mannered and vulgar people when we are in the rough. Only since the advent of our most welcome friends from America do we realise how much leeway

we have to make up before we become a disciplined democracy. Apparently we want all the benefits of democracy, but few of the obligations. Our friends have shown us up; they are clean in dress, body and speech, and that cannot be said of many of our people.

One of the questions that concerns me, and particularly in the province I represent, is food. We are told, and I believe it to be true, that there is likely to be some shortages, probably of potatoes and of at least one kind of meat, namely beef. There is no shortage of milk in the country. I suggest to the Government again that it should not wait until things happen, but lead by organising a milk supply for the metropolitan area. That can be done easily, as the milk is available. It is no use waiting, however, and asking producers of butter to swing over to the production of whole milk, while skimmed milk is necessary to rear calves. We should anticipate a milk shortage by making arrangements beforehand in the nearer country districts; by "nearer" I mean those districts a little further than the districts from which the milk comes today. At present, Brunswick is the furthest place from which it comes. By going another 10 or 20 miles and making necessary transport arrangements, all the milk required by the metropolitan area could be supplied. Those arrangements must be made, however, before the producers have calves to rear, as these must, as I said, have separated milk.

I feel certain a milk supply can be guaranteed. As a matter of fact, it will help the butter position, because we produce more butter during the late winter, right through to spring and early summer, than we can possibly use. We store what we can and export the remainder. The public seems to be afraid of a shortage of butter; but I assure members that what I have said is a normal happening. We always have a shortage of butter at certain times in Western Australia, because we cannot store sufficient in the winter to carry us through the summer. We have enough to see us through January and February; but we have not storage facilities for a quarter of our first-grade butter. We normally import butter from the Eastern States. We cannot do so now because of a shortage of shipping.

The extra potatoes required for local consumption can be produced, but we must make the necessary preparation beforehand. The coming season's crop will be planted from June until the middle of July, and if the Government is desirous of ensuring a certain supply of potatoes, it should do what was done in the flax industry. It should say to the growers, "We want such and such a quantity of potatoes. It does not look as if we can get them. We will guarantee you a price for first-grade potatoes." That price need not be very high. I suggest it should be about £9 5s., Perth, which would be equal to £8 a ton on trucks. It would be a payable price, and if the growers were assured of it I feel certain that they would grow the extra quantity required. But potato-growing, like horse racing, is a gamble. There is a shortage of labour and the growers are likely to say, "I have as much as I can do and I am not entering into a gamble with potatoes." Had the price of flax not been guaranteed, in my opinion not one acre of it would have been planted. But the growers were guaranteed a certain price, not an excessive one; indeed, some lost money at the price. I am sure the production of potatoes can be increased, perhaps not to a very great extent, because the seed is not available. We can, however, produce this State's requirements and have a surplus for export to the Eastern States, where there is also a shortage.

With regard to beef, it seems to me that there will be a shortage. The State Price Fixing Commissioner—what his powers are I do not know—has apparently fixed the price of meat. He says that he has not done so, but that is a subterfuge, because he has done so in effect. He said that butchers must not sell at a price higher than that which was ruling on the 18th March. I may be wrong about the date, although I think I am right. The market then happened to be low for beef, but high for lamb and mutton. The following week beef went up to 50s. per 100 lbs., which is 6d. per lb. On the 18th March, it was 48s., but mutton and lamb brought good prices on that date. Therefore mutton and lamb were fixed at prices which they have not since reached. What is the position with regard to beef, however? The maximum price possible for beef is 48s., that was the wholesale market price ruling on the 18th March.

What is the effect of this fixation of price? I spent all Tuesday morning at the Midland Junction saleyards, where I had some cattle of choice quality for auction. I received 6¼d. per lb. for them, notwithstanding that the price is fixed at 48s., which equals 5¾d. What are the butchers going to do about that? They are not allowed to sell beef at a price higher than it was on the 18th March. They sell my meat, or meat of equal quality, at that price, plus their usual profit, but they are lifting up the price of the lower grade beef. They buy old cows and inferior steers at 4½d. a lb. The very people it is desired to protect by price fixing are therefore being forced to pay as high a price for poorer quality meat. The butcher must make up his margin; if it is 20 per cent. and he makes only 10 per cent. on the choice beef, he must increase the price of the inferior meat. That comes of trying to fix the price of a commodity sold by auction, a commodity of varying degrees of quality. Who can determine that it will be choice when it comes to be sold over the counter? I am told, on the best of authority, that that is what is happening. The same fiasco occurred last year. It is a pity that the Price Fixing Commissioner, before declaring the price of such a commodity, did not consult the people who really knew something about the industry. He could have consulted butchers, agents and producers.

The question of making up of shortages was referred to by Mr. Macfarlane. He rather suggested that there was a shortage of meat at the present time, but that is not so, because mutton and lamb are still available in large quantities. There is a shortage of beef. Whether there will be a shortage of mutton and lamb in the near future I do not know. There is, however, an unlimited demand for pig-meat and production of it can be enormously increased if the Government will take the required action. I would urge the Government to use its powers in this connection, without consulting Parliament. The production of pork at a reasonable fixed price depends upon the price of grain. Pigs are animals that multiply tremendously in a matter of months. We have lying in our bins millions of bushels of wheat.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Never to be used!

Hon. L. CRAIG: Probably. The wheat does not belong to the producers; it has

been paid for and is the property of the Commonwealth Government. So here is a commodity for which there is little or no use, together with an urgent need for the production of pig-meats for which there is an enormous demand. If the wheat could be switched over to the pigs those problems would be solved. If a person desires to buy wheat today to feed to pigs he must pay 3s. 10½d. per bushel plus various other charges which bring the total to something over 4s. a bushel. That is not a profitable price to pay for the feeding of pigs. The price of pig-meat has been fixed. I think the price of pork is 8¼d. lb.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Only for export.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I understood all these prices were fixed as at the 18th March.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: No.

Hon. L. CRAIG: However, it does not matter. The point is that we have a commodity that is necessary for the production of a food that is urgently required. Would it not be advisable for the Commonwealth Government to say to the pig-breeders, "For the purpose of feeding your stock you shall have the wheat you want at 2s. a bushel." Is it not better to sell the wheat at that price than to let it rot? When it rots it can be bought for 2s. a bushel. When the weevil is amongst the wheat it can be bought for less, but it cannot be bought before it depreciates; if it is, the same price must be paid for it as is paid by the millers. We are building bins costing hundreds of thousands of pounds for the purpose of storing a commodity for which we have no use, but which is urgently required by pig-breeders. The only trouble is the question of price. Surely the Government on its own initiative, without consulting swarms of producers' organisations, can say, "This is our commodity and you urgently require it, so we will sell it at a price you can afford to pay." In that way the production of pork would be increased. Surely this sort of thing can be done without a lot of meetings. I am sure the whole community would support the Government in any such action.

I would like to say a word or two about aliens, a subject which Mr. Mann introduced. The problem is rather apparent in the district in which I live. The aliens there are well-behaved young men, mostly single, though some are married. They are 35

years of age and under, and have no land of their own but are renting property on which they grow potatoes. That is all right. I do not object for one moment. However, the fact is creating a feeling of anger in the district, especially amongst women with sons at the war. Most of these men are naturalised and it is considered that being Australian citizens they should accept the privileges and obligations imposed on their fellow citizens.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Have they been called up?

Hon. L. CRAIG: No.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Why?

Hon. L. CRAIG: I presume the Army does not want to be bothered with aliens or those of alien origin. I do not know. I think it would be a good gesture on the part of the Commonwealth Government to say that these men shall be treated as Australian citizens and be given work accordingly. There is a lot of work to be done in different parts, and men are being called up to do that work and not only to drill with rifles. These men are truck-drivers and if the obligation were placed upon them they would do the work. What is riling the people of my locality is that these men can pick and choose their work because of the labour shortage and are getting the benefits of higher remuneration, and receiving other benefits that these people know their own sons are not enjoying. Members can imagine what it is like to see three or four strapping young Italians walking down the street and not an Australian to be seen anywhere because all the Australians are in khaki. That is the reason for the criticism. It is felt that these aliens should be treated the same as Australians of their age. If they are under 30 and single they should be called up. They are not milking cows or doing farm work. The question ought to be looked into though there are only about half-a-dozen of these aliens in my district.

Under the powers given to him by the Commonwealth Government the Premier has authority to deal with such matters as tea rationing, and I suggest that now that Ceylon and India are being attacked there will shortly be an entire absence of tea, which is a dire necessity for older people—women rather than men. I see the Minister does not agree with me. Tea is rationed to everybody of nine years of age and upwards. From my inquiries I consider that girls

under 20 would not care if tea were taken away altogether; it is not a necessity for young people.

The Chief Secretary: They have changed their tastes!

Hon. L. CRAIG: I am not suggesting they want beer, but they do not want tea. If tea is going to be as scarce as appears likely, those under 21 should not be included for a ration. The tea should be retained for those who are elderly and to whom the commodity is a necessity. Some women of 45 years and upwards, if they do not have a cup of tea at a certain time develop splitting headaches. That applies to a lot of people. The letters that have appeared in the paper have all been from people of that age; people who are distressed at the thought of being short of tea. It would do no harm to cut out those under 20 and conserve the supplies for people—

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Like yourself!

Hon. L. CRAIG: No. I would come in the under 20 category, though I am a little older! I support the motion.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [3.23]: I appreciate the action of the Government in acceding to the request of members to call Parliament together to consider the war effort and also many matters that will no doubt be brought forward as the session continues. It will give us an opportunity to discuss many subjects that have exercised the minds of the community since the war has been brought nearer to our shores. Many people have been harassed by the various orders and restrictions that have been issued. Members of Parliament have been looked to for guidance, and the question has been raised as to what Parliament is going to do about things. Members have expressed their willingness to give the Government any help it may desire and which it may be possible to render. This meeting of Parliament will give members an opportunity of advising the Government on questions that primarily concern people in the outer areas.

The goldmining industry appears to have been singled out not only by the Federal Government but by the British Government for onslaughts that were never anticipated, and it is a serious thing indeed to hear suggestions made that there is no need to continue that industry. That has been stated from various sources, and I think we are

indebted to Mr. Seddon for the very wise remarks he made on the subject, and the note of caution which he sounded. For years I have realised the importance of the goldmining industry to this State. During the depression, when the price of gold was very low and the cost of production high, many mines went out of existence, and Western Australia was faced with an extremely serious position. An investigation was made, and a delegation went to the Eastern States with a view to persuading the Federal Government that it would be a good thing to subsidise the industry. But for that, the industry would have gone out of existence. The Commonwealth Government has seen fit to grant all sorts of subsidies to many secondary industries, but here was a primary industry which it felt was fair game. Fortunately, however, it was induced to assist in the re-establishment of mines by granting the required subsidy. The importance of the industry was realised then, and I fail to understand why today the attitude should be taken that it does not matter whether goldmining sinks or swims.

Another important industry is the wheat industry, which has been experiencing serious disabilities owing to war conditions. This State has been singled out by the Federal Government for a severe cut in the area to be sown. I presume that is owing to the difficulty of sending the product oversea. But the extraordinary feature is that the reduction does not apply to the Eastern States. I should like the Minister to give us some reason for that. Why must we acquiesce in an anomaly of that kind? In my opinion it is contrary to the Constitution which was framed when Federation was accomplished.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Our own representatives urged this reduction of acreage.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: They may have done so, but they urged it for the whole of Australia.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Quite so, but this is the only State that did urge it.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: They urged it on behalf of the whole of Australia: that is my point. The Constitution is being flagrantly broken by the Federal Government's determining that one State only shall suffer this reduction. Personally, I take exception to that action. Of course, if in the national interest it is necessary to impose a severe

cut, even if it should apply to the whole of our wheat areas, the farmers will probably find some other means by which to earn a living. To me the most extraordinary feature of the whole business is that in the proposal to cut down the area to be cultivated, the authorities have included that utilised for wheaten hay. Owing to the reduced petrol supplies, many farmers have given an indication of their intention to change over to the horse. I certainly assume that petrol restrictions would imply a great return to the horse, and in many instances farmers have adopted that course. That means they will require more wheaten hay. Of course farmers could go in for oaten hay if they so desired, and I know that many like a mixture. I have often used a mixture of early ripening oats with a wheat that will hold green for a longer period. It makes admirable feed for stock but others prefer wheaten hay, particularly for sheep. It would be better to increase the area sown for wheaten hay rather than to reduce the acreage. I cannot understand such an anomalous action being taken by the authorities.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The main reason for using wheaten hay is to keep the ground clean: otherwise the oats would be through the whole area.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Perhaps so, but I decidedly prefer wheaten hay. Those who go in for racehorses obviously want oaten hay, but I am one of those who believe that in these days racing should be curtailed. However, I do not think there is any question of interference regarding the protection of oaten hay or even barley hay, the latter of which feeds the stock prefer most. However, I hope this matter will receive more consideration. Mr. Craig and other members have indicated the necessity for a considerable increase in the beef output. Many people are using large quantities of conserved fodder for that purpose. In the South-West the same class of fodder is not required as in the eastern districts. At any rate there will be a great demand for hay for the production of beef, particularly as the Americans prefer that meat to mutton.

Next I shall refer to the wool position, which involves a return annually of about £5,000,000 to Western Australia. Great difficulty was experienced with regard to shearing last year, due to the scarcity of labour. Then again, much of the difficulty arose in consequence of the long period over which

shearing took place, with the result that the grass seed pest became most troublesome. That difficulty will be intensified this year. I trust some arrangement will be arrived at with the military authorities for the release of suitable men to assist the industry so that shearing can be carried out within a reasonable period and thus avoid the complication due to grass seeds.

Hon. G. B. Wood: You would not prefer a start in March or April?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I believe that has been suggested by the Government. I say God forbid that anything of the sort should be contemplated. That was a dreadful proposition.

Hon. L. Craig: Something you would expect from the man who suggested it.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I hear it has been suggested, but in the districts with which I am associated such a proposal would certainly be taboo and quite out of the question. However, it is not a matter of advice from officials but one, for instance, that is governed by the vagaries of the wonderful growth of green feed in the Kimberleys where the rains fall during the summer months.

The Chief Secretary: You will want more manpower then.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: It is not a question of manpower but of the tremendous growth of grass.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: You want to change the season.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Although I did not altogether swallow it, I was told that in the Kimberleys the grass grows so rapidly that the lambs cannot follow the ewes. Up there the flat country is mostly used during the lambing season and the producers do not dare to run the risk of the whole of their sheep being washed away should there be a flood of water due to torrential rains. As a matter of fact, lambing up north is carried out practically at the same time as in the southern areas, but in the Kimberleys it is done on dry grass country whereas in the south the lambs are run on green grass country. The ewes do not have the same flush of milk when on dry grass as is apparent in the southern portions of the State when the ewes are on green grass. When travelling through the Kimberleys I was surprised at the type of sheep there. They reminded me of beer barrels with four pegs

for legs. The lamb there is like a poddy and invariably a poddy does not make a decent respectable-looking sheep. If a lamb is developed on a dry feed area, it seldom develops into a fine animal. For that reason one does not see in the north the beautiful sheep so common in the south. Shearing must be done before the grass seed difficulty becomes a menace; otherwise there will be a tragedy.

Then again, the suggestion that shearing should be undertaken just before the winter months commence is scandalous and would amount to cruelty to the animals. They would lose the protection of the fleeces during the winter months, and that would apply particularly to the lambs which rely upon the shelter and warmth of the mothers in the wool during frosts and wet weather. Then again, the wool grows more quickly during winter months than during the summer, and that would tend to accentuate the grass seed difficulty with the lambs. I am surprised at the suggestion that has been made, and I hope my few remarks will act as a deterrent to anything being done along those lines.

We know that many of these farmers who have to switch over from wheat to sheep are not acquainted with the pitfalls into which they may drop. Then again, in connection with shearing it is necessary to have really expert men. Most of these have gone into the Army. A large proportion of them might be released at the shearing period of the year, but it is hopeless to expect untrained men to go to the shearing floor and class and handle sheep. Moreover, shearers cannot be trained in five minutes. Untrained shearers, I repeat, are hopeless. I do not know how long shearing would take with untrained shearers, or how the work would be done.

As regards the question of pig meat, we are now told that there is a ready market locally for pig meat, that more of it is required, and so on; but so many farmers have lost money through the action of the Price Fixing Commissioner that it will be difficult to get them back into growing the particular class of pig required. Those farmers have been left high and dry. I personally was caught in the scheme, indirectly, and dropped £250. Then the wiseacres came along and picked up the pigs very cheaply. Some of the experts realised the mistake they had

made in advising the farmers, and the purchasers at break-down values made pots of money.

Hon. G. B. Wood: You were not the only loser.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I realise that. These mistakes have far-reaching effects. The hay business moreover affected me when I put in my area of wheat. The hay spoiled my average over four years. Thus I fell in both ways. Accordingly, farmers are sceptical of many of the instructions which come their way.

As regards fruit, quite recently I have been concerned about the number of children who hardly ever see fruit. While they cannot get it, they know of the large quantities of fruit being destroyed, and know of fruitgrowers who have to bury fruit that they cannot sell and are not permitted to give away. It appears that all fruit must be disposed of through the board. The board must have reasons for the orders it gives, but surely it is cruel that children should see wonderful supplies absolutely destroyed and wasted while they were unable to obtain fruit of any kind. They cannot go into Perth to buy it. I have been informed that one can get truck-loads of apples for the purpose of poisoning rabbits, and get them very cheaply. But those apples cannot be used for eating purposes. Children should get more fruit in order to make up deficiencies in their diet. Not long ago I called at a place where there were a few pear trees. The number of pears was too small for the board to take. Therefore the board decided that those pears must be destroyed. People cannot obtain fruit by the case, because of added charges. The Government are now having cases of fruit sold and delivered to people who care to go to the Government lorries which convey fruit about the metropolitan area. The scheme is a splendid one. Many people cannot afford to pay the prices demanded in the shops.

Another matter affecting our people is the National Security Regulations. I saw stated in the Press recently that employers had to register in order to engage a hand. Many men in the back country find it very difficult indeed to get hands. However, if a man is passing through, country employers are willing to enter into an engagement with him. Now, however, employers have to get a permit to employ from headquarters. Again, a man is liable to get into difficulties

if he takes a job without having a permit to work. We know the delays that occur in getting these things through.

The Chief Secretary: Does that regulation apply to agricultural labour?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I hope it does not. Perhaps it applies to goldfields labour only.

The Chief Secretary: Agricultural labour is exempt.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I am indeed glad to hear that. I believe I am right in bringing the matter before the House. Moreover, one's neighbour may offer twice as much as oneself is offering. That applies to the shearing industry. I support the motion.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central) [3.56]: I do not know that I would have contributed to this debate but for some of the views I have heard expressed here during its course. A few weeks ago the party with which I am associated passed a resolution for the calling together of Parliament. Whilst I was in sympathy with the idea, yet, having some knowledge of the Defence Department and being aware that the State Government has no control over defence matters, I was doubtful whether any good purpose would be served by summoning members. On second thoughts, however, I called to mind that the party as a whole desired the convening of Parliament because of the fearful state of uncertainty, almost despair, permeating the people whom the Country Party directly represents.

During this debate references have been made to the dire state of people in the country. It was primarily owing to that fact that we convened a meeting of our members, being desirous that something concrete might be obtained from the Federal Government. I do not think we had any doubt that State Ministers going to the East did their best for all sections of this community. However, this being a sovereign State I thought Ministers should have the backing of both Houses of Parliament relatively to Canberra, and that an opportunity should be given them to become acquainted with the defence situation in this momentous period of the Empire's history.

Without entering into details I shall deal with a few remarks made by private members. The speeches of Mr. Cornell and Mr. Parker were very fine. Although Mr. Parker has until recently been actively

associated with the Defence Department, he was not afraid to say what he thought about its activities. I refer especially to defence measures and air raid precautions. That gives me a chance to say something which I have not heard expressly mentioned in this Chamber. Many people outside deplore the fact that there is not closer collaboration between the Army and the Civil Defence Council. The Country Party members of both Houses were, some few weeks ago, addressed by the officer of the Civil Defence Council responsible for the arrangements governing evacuation of people from the metropolitan area to the country districts. I do not wish to give away any secrets, but I am fortified in the opinion I have formed by the words of the officer who said he could not obtain very much information from the Defence Department. I had thought that the Premier, being the head of the State, should be taken, if not entirely into the confidence of the Defence Department, at least more into its confidence than in the past. This should also apply to the Minister who controls the Civil Defence Council, because it is only by collaboration between the Defence Department and the Civil Defence Council that we can hope to achieve that measure of success which, I am sure, we all desire in the event of any drastic happening.

Mention was made of efficiency by Mr. Seddon. The remarks heard here and there make one feel that it is impossible to get that efficiency which it is so necessary we should have. I do not want to hark back to the last war, but at that time I was in uniform in Melbourne, where I gave evidence on defence administration. I have not had the opportunity to get behind the scenes on this occasion, but from what I can hear and see it would appear that we have learnt nothing from the mistakes made in the last war. I am talking not about tactics but administration; what we call the internal economy. To give an example of what I am referring to I will quote one instance. There is a siding about four miles from Geraldton called Utakarra and there is another siding about nine miles from Geraldton called Narngulu, one mile directly opposite the Air Force camp. The personnel who visit the metropolitan area in hundreds on leave, never get off at Narngulu but are carried on to Utakarra and the motor

transport which takes these men back to camp travels eight miles instead of two. A perfectly good road runs from the camp to Narngulu. I have travelled it myself. True, it is not bitumen, but it is a good macadamised road. That has been going on ever since the camp started. I have not waited until this session to bring it up, but have spoken to all sorts of people interested. They have all shaken their heads and said they do not know why. Imagine my surprise last Tuesday when I saw about 50 Air Force men getting out at Narngulu. It has taken 18 months to save that precious motor spirit.

Whilst our Prime Minister is making appeals for funds over the air and advertisements appear in the Press requesting the public to contribute money to further our successful war effort, people are being chilled by the things they can see costing money which could be saved. Mr. Seddon mentioned this matter of efficiency and I am sorry he is not in the Chamber because he is one whose word we can pretty well accept. If I knew of a man in uniform who had accountancy qualifications and who was running around delivering papers, I should certainly lose no time making representations to have that very glaring matter rectified. I will mention a matter in which I did take action. A man came to me with a complaint. He had come off his farm and brought his wife to Geraldton so that he could serve his country. He was in Geraldton for a fortnight during which time any inquiries about his wife and family could have been made. About a week after he left the town a policeman came to make inquiries of his wife concerning her private means and children. Some week later the soldier came to me and wanted to know why a policeman was making inquiries. The sergeant said he was carrying out orders. Now, the visit of a policeman to many homes is not looked on as a very nice happening. I wrote to the Defence Department and was told that it was necessary, for pay purposes, that these inquiries should be made. I went back to Geraldton and found there was a military staff which could make the inquiries. I discovered that the Defence Department was paying the civil police to make these inquiries. I was able to prove to the satisfaction of the colonel in charge of the ad-

ministration that there was sufficient military personnel to make the inquiries without engaging, paying, and taking up the time of the civil police. It is not necessary for a meeting of Parliament to bring these little matters to notice.

I have just one other matter to mention. I have referred to it before. It deals with the conservation of motor spirit. We have to get it from overseas. The State Government could have taken a greater part in this matter. Why both State and Federal Governments did not visualise what was going to happen and err on the side of making sure, I cannot say. I have here an issue of the "Road Patrol" of the 10th March last. It speaks of the announcement in the Press of the Commonwealth Government regulations providing for motor vehicles serving industries essential to the nation's war effort to be equipped with gas producers within 28 days. This means that the makers of these outfits would have to provide them on a scale not yet approached in Western Australia or any other country in the world. It is that kind of thing which makes these official announcements appear to be what they undoubtedly are—ridiculous. We have dwelt too long on this business. This action should have been taken 12 or 18 months ago.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: We have not enough oxy-welders to fit them.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: This afternoon Mr. Craig spoke of things he knows something about. He urged that if potatoes, butter or milk are wanted, action should be taken at once. It is this failure to get right down on the job that is causing many of our people to wonder what is happening. I have just another illustration. At a certain seaport town some barbed wire is laid on the beach. I did not get away overseas during the last war, but I am advised by men who did go that it was absolutely useless. This barbed wire is a standing joke at the town in question. The men say it would be much easier to get through the barbed wire entanglements than through the red tape which is such a deadly encirclement of our Defence Department.

I am frequently in contact with Government departments. The Premier of this State is the member for Geraldton and he cannot live there; and other members can-

not live there. I do live in Geraldton, and if I can do anything at all for the people there, I do so, though I have been told by some members that certain jobs are not mine. I attend to as many domestic matters for the people of Geraldton as possible while Mr. Willcock's time and attention are taken up with the bigger affairs of State. I am perhaps brought more into contact with ordinary matters than some members of this House. For instance, this morning, I was for two hours at the Commonwealth Crown Law Department trying to do something which the Commonwealth legislature has failed to do. Two people from my province have arrived at the evening of their lives. They own a house in the metropolitan area, and they have come down to occupy it. They have had splendid tenants. The present tenant is a one-legged returned soldier who has lived in the house for seven years. They told him they wanted to live in their own house and he turned round and bought another house.

Under the regulations, however, he is unable, after having paid a deposit of £150 out of a total cost of £850, to gain possession of the house. Of course, £150 is not quite one-quarter of the purchase price. Had it been one-quarter some redress would have been possible. Owing to the regulation passed to protect the dependants of men overseas he cannot obtain possession of the house. He has paid a deposit on it; he has to maintain his weekly payments and he also has to pay the rent to these friends of mine who are hiring rooms in the city because they cannot get into their own home which they purchased many years ago for themselves. When we were passing similar legislation here last year I voted for the amendment to give people more time. The tenant has been in occupation for seven years and the regulations provide that seven days' notice shall be given for every six months, which means that 15 weeks' notice has to be given, and then the parties have to appear before a magistrate.

I wish to place on record my appreciation of the sympathetic manner in which Mr. Mills, the Commonwealth Crown Law representative in this State, received the lady whose husband is a one-legged returned soldier. The man is working in the local limbless factory and cannot get possession of his property. It is always Parliament's endeavour to make provision for the genuine

person, and if members are not aware of these regulations and their extensive ramifications, I hope they will make themselves acquainted with them and assist in making representations to Federal members to ensure that there will not be a repetition of such a case as I have mentioned.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

MOTION—LICENSING ACT.

As to Restrictions on Sale of Liquor.

Debate resumed from the previous day on the following motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter (East):—

(i) That, in the opinion of this House any further liquor restrictions proposed by the State Government should be confined to areas already prescribed, and in these areas—

(a) The closing time be 7 p.m. in lieu of 6 p.m.

(b) No liquor in bottles be supplied from any licensed premises after 4 p.m.

(c) No liquor in bottles or other containers advertising such liquors shall be displayed after 4 p.m.

(ii) And in addition throughout the State—

(a) For sly grog selling there shall be imprisonment for the first and any subsequent offence without the option of a fine.

(b) That it shall be made an offence for any person to bring into or have in his possession any liquor within the precincts of any public hall where any entertainment is being or about to be held.

(c) And that the provisions of the Licensing Act be rigidly enforced.

HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH (Metropolitan) [4.16]: I do not desire to give a silent vote on this motion. Control of the sale and consumption of liquor in war time is a matter for both Federal and State authorities, but I do not think that either Government should altogether escape reproach for not having taken earlier action. Had something been done directly the need for action became obvious, quite probably less drastic steps than are now necessary would have sufficed. However, action has been taken at last. The Federal Government, by limiting production, has taken one short step towards limiting consumption, but I am not altogether convinced that in this any more than in any other form of rationing a method has been devised that will secure a sort of rough-and-ready equality of sacrifice and generally achieve the objects that the Government has in view.

I consider that the restriction on production is an entirely proper step to take. I am also in accord with the decision of the Federal Government to restrict the hours of hotel trading to seven per day. A provision of that kind should apply right through the Commonwealth. Its chief merit will lie in the release of manpower, and a great many men at present employed in the industry—a very proper and useful industry in peacetime—will now be available for purposes that are undoubtedly of much greater importance during a time of war.

I think it would be well if the Federal Government took action in regard to the alcoholic strength of liquor. I am not sure that it would not be a wise step even in peacetime. Some of the older members of this Chamber may remember that when our licensing legislation, which embodied the nine to nine provision, was passed in this House, I was successful—not without great difficulty and certainly I would not have succeeded had it not been for the excellent support I received from the late Dr. Saw—in inserting a provision making it an offence for any licensed victualler to supply spirits in a glass of a capacity of less than a gill and a quarter. The measure of spirits at that time was about a quarter of a gill and that enabled the customer to dilute his spirits to the extent of four parts of water to one part of spirits.

Having been a confirmed but I hope moderate spirit drinker for upwards of half a century and having experienced just what occurs in hard-drinking places like Broken Hill, Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie in the early days, as well as in country districts, and knowing something of the habits of people in eastern countries where the climate is even more severe than ours, I am fully convinced that one of the greatest evils resulting from spirit drinking is that people drink it with very little water. By reducing the alcoholic strength of liquor, the same end might be attained. Incidentally I am not sure that the provision I laboured so hard to get inserted in the Act has not to a large extent fallen into disuse. My reason for insisting upon it at the time—I say insisting, because I had to meet the opposition of several Ministerial colleagues—was that I was then frequently travelling the country districts in hot weather, and if one asked for a whisky and soda or whisky and water, he was supplied with a glass that would not

hold more water than the equivalent of the nobbler of whisky. In hot weather nobody can drink a concoction of that sort without injury to his health.

As regards the State obligations in this matter, the principal one is to ensure the enforcement of the law. I do not think it can be claimed that the law has been enforced in the past. Already we see good effects from its enforcement to a far greater extent during the last two or three weeks. I notice that the Premier of one State announced a little while ago that his Government intended to prosecute sly-grog sellers, something new, apparently a candid admission that in the past sly-grog sellers have been permitted to prey upon the simple minded without interference by the police. I am glad to say I do not believe that our Government ever looked at the matter from that point of view. I do not think it can be contended for a moment that the enforcement of the liquor law in this State has been anything like as rigorous as it should have been, and I am glad to learn that the Government is now determined that in future every effort should be made to compel the people engaged in this trade to observe the law and entirely prohibit unauthorised persons from making a profit out of it.

The only other point is the question of the period or periods when the seven hours of trading shall apply. I hope the Federal Government will stick to the idea of seven hours. My conviction is that those should be the hours, and the times most reasonable and proper and to the least extent harmful for people to consume alcoholic liquor. I suggest, are the meal hours in the middle of the day and in the evening. I see no good reason why hotels should be open in the mornings. I can see nothing but harm resulting from people being able to hang over bars all the afternoon, and without attempting to be dictatorial in the matter, I suggest that the proper spread of hours would be from say 10.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. and from 4.30 to 7.30 p.m. That would cover both meal hours. I am certain from the knowledge I gained of conditions in the Eastern States during the four years I spent in Sydney that there is no special virtue in 6 o'clock closing; it is just a prohibitionist ideal. The right time for the people to consume liquor is about the time for the midday and evening meals. If we fall in with the Federal dic-

tation—if I may so term it—that there shall be seven hours of trading, those hours should cover the midday and evening meals, hours at which liquor can be used with the greatest advantage—I say that advisedly—and with the least possible harm to the community generally.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central) [4.26]: When speaking just now I referred to the reasons that prompted the Country Party to demand that Parliament be called together, and quite overlooked the fact that the motion we are now discussing was one of the prime factors that influenced the decision. All members of the party were seriously alarmed at the failure of the Government to enforce the law. I wish to say now that I was 100 per cent. behind that decision. I have not witnessed much of the excess that has taken place because I am not often in Perth. I commend Mr. Craig for his remarks about getting to work and growing things, but I cannot agree with him in his remarks about feeling shame at what has happened. He should know very well that no matter how many instances came under his notice they were confined to only a very small percentage of all the men, and I think Mr. Piesse put his finger on an important point when he mentioned his experience during the 1914-1918 war. Mr. Cornell also made reference to the same thing.

It was not left for the civil police, who, we are told, are anathema to the men in khaki; it was not left to the military police; the men's own cobbles in the Army did the job, not so much with the idea of punishing the offender as of taking care of him. When I think of what our boys have had to put up with while abroad, and during the trip back, the old saying recurs to my mind that comparisons are odious. It is hardly necessary for me to say how much we admire the conduct of the Americans, but I do not think it should go forth that we are ashamed of our fellow Australians because a small number have indulged to excess. Rather should we make allowances for those men and bear in mind that the fatherly action required for their protection was lacking. I am glad that the matter has been brought before Parliament.

I am fully in accord with another remark made by Mr. Craig. I was waiting for an opportunity to make it myself, because it had not been mentioned by any

of the other speakers. I hope the State Government will take some action in regard to the sale of bottled beer at railway refreshment rooms. Last Thursday the proprietor of a railway refreshment room came to me and said, "What is my position? These travellers have purchased all my bulk liquor and nearly all my bottled beer." Anyone who travels is aware of some of the disgusting exhibitions of drinking that occur on trains. It makes one wonder, when there is a refreshment room every few miles, why there is any necessity for the purchase of bottled beer. Even should they miss a drink at one railway refreshment room, they would not have to wait long before they reached another at which they could assuage their thirst. I am with Mr. Craig and other members who desire something to be done about this matter. In view of what Mr. Hamersley has said, I sincerely trust something will be done to restrict the sale of bottled beer at railway refreshment rooms.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [4.32]: Like most hon. members, I have been very much pained at the exhibitions of drunkenness in the city streets during the past two or three months. Particularly do I join with one member who said he was sorry the Government had not taken action in the matter until forced to do so by public opinion. That is a rather sorry state of affairs, but we have a Government that is hard to move. Several members have tried hard for a long time to get the Government to take action in regard to another evil in our midst. However, the drunkenness got so bad that the Government did take action. I am glad it did; because, in my opinion, drunkenness, instead of tending to decrease, is increasing. Young people are taking to drink and the habit is growing on them. I was wondering whether the comparatively recent innovation of lounge bars in hotels is responsible for increased drinking as far as one section of the community is concerned. It would be rather hard to advocate the closing of lounge bars in hotels, because there are times when men, and women too, are in need of a stimulant, and may not care to go into the bar, particularly bars as they are today, where frequently men have almost to fight to get near the counter. Lounge bars are undoubtedly essential, al-

though it seems to me they have been badly abused.

Hon. J. Cornell: They were unknown 20 years ago.

Hon. W. J. MANN: There should be better supervision of lounge bars. I have been in one or two of them on various occasions and have been hurt to see young women, girls in their teens, drinking like seasoned veterans, and taking more alcoholic liquor than they could properly carry. In addition to taking steps to amend our licensing laws, there should be some move to impress upon our people that if we do not discountenance that sort of thing, we will get a bad name, one we do not deserve, because only a comparatively small number of people are the culprits.

I desire to direct the attention of the Government to the manner in which some hotels on main roads just outside the 20-mile radius of the metropolis are conducting their business. Some have a most extraordinary code; they keep their hotels open 24 hours a day, including Sunday. I pass one occasionally and notice people in it drinking after hours. I wonder how the proprietor gets the liquor. He must have a better technique than some of his competitors.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: What were you doing there?

Hon. W. J. MANN: I was passing along the road. I know it is impossible to police all the hotels all the time, but it seems to me that some are not policed at all. Recently some people I know went to stay at a hotel for a lengthy period; they thought it would be very pleasant, but they had not stayed there long before they found that, if they were to get quiet sleep, they would have to move somewhere else, because it was impossible to get it at the hotel. That should not be so. One of the contributory causes is that people are able to go to the country and make a drunken welter of it. Have members noticed the number of motor accidents that have occurred in the early hours of the morning during the last few months? The majority of these accidents take place in the small hours of the morning; and, when inquiries are made, it is often found that the unfortunate victim was celebrating at some hostelry in the vicinity. That shows laxity of supervision.

I support the motion, except that I think, with Sir Hal Colebatch, that the opening

hours of hotels should include mealtimes. I suggest that hotels remain closed until 11 a.m., open till 2.30 p.m., then close and open again at 4 p.m. and remain open until 7.30 or even 8 p.m. I think that would be a sensible idea. I am satisfied, from what I have seen in the Eastern States, that 6 o'clock closing is a farce. No man wanting a drink there goes without one. The hotels just seem to close one set of doors and open another set wide; and consequently the people break the law. We do not want that occurring here; we prefer that our people should be supplied with their requirements in a decent way.

With regard to the portion of the motion dealing with the rigid enforcement of the licensing laws, that is a very difficult matter. Some provisions of the Licensing Act are rigidly enforced. If an unfortunate half-caste in a country district gets within the precincts of a hotel, he is caught.

Hon. J. Cornell: And locked up.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Yes. He has not a chance. Other men who make confounded nuisances of themselves seem to be able to get as much drink as they want. I would make the penalties for serving drunken persons and young people very severe.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: To do that you will have to amend the Act.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Why not amend it?

Hon. C. F. Baxter: You could not bring forward an amendment at this juncture.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I do not know that we could not. There is nothing impossible, except to define the impossible. We could do it if we had the will. However, I support the motion, and am pleased that Mr. Baxter brought it forward.

HON. J. M. MACFARLANE (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.43]: I do not desire to speak at length on the motion. I have been shocked on several occasions to see the recent happenings in Perth due to excessive drinking. It does not matter upon whom the burden of responsibility rests; the fact is that those responsible allowed this disgraceful state of affairs to develop. Whether the responsibility rested upon the Federal or the State authorities, they were, in the end, forced to take action. I would like to know from Mr. Baxter how he thinks his motion will better the position? What effect will it have? It will only be a recommendation. To implement the

motion, it would be necessary to amend our licensing laws. I am entirely in accord with the alteration in the hours for the sale of liquor. I favour the motion insofar as it seeks to prevent the sale of bottled beer and spirits, because it is those lines that have brought about much of the scandal which has taken place. People buy the bottled liquor in hotels at closing hours and then in the evening take it to dances and other functions. They can be seen drinking this bottled liquor in motor cars along the street. Nor are they molested by the police; I do not know whether the police have power to interfere with them.

This excessive drinking is dragging our young and unsophisticated girls into danger. Recently we read in the paper of a case of a girl whose death was caused by suffocation supervening upon excessive drinking. In another case a young girl said a soldier had taken her to his lodgings every night and that he was doing her a good turn by paying for her board and lodging, while asking nothing in return. When that sort of thing happens amongst our young women, we can only blame the parents in the first place and then the fact that the Act does not operate in the way we desire. I propose to support the motion and I hope that if it is carried it will have the effect of restricting the sale of bottled drinks. Unfortunately, however, it is only a recommendation.

Our courts are employed for a good part of their time in dealing with cases in which people have taken drink to places of amusement and created disturbances there. I do not very often go to evening functions but on one or two occasions I have been out and have been astonished to find men in evening dress and well-dressed ladies carrying armfuls of beer into dance halls where they apparently cannot secure liquor. To me it was shocking that that sort of thing could happen. The proposal to check the sale of liquor in bottles appears satisfactory, as does the suggestion by Mr. Craig and Mr. E. H. H. Hall regarding the need for some restriction on men taking liquor on trains with a view to having a good time drinking during the journey and making a nuisance of themselves to other people.

With regard to sly-grog selling, I support the motion wholeheartedly. I would never fine the sly-grog seller but make the punishment more effective with a view to breaking

down this pernicious practice. In connection with hours of trading I had a telephone message—and I daresay Mr. Baxter did also—from a man who lives at Mundaring and who pointed out that the present closing time is not very satisfactory to the customers of his hotel. Some of them work in the bush and have a fair way to travel and others work in town and by the time they have made their train journey they are too late to get any refreshment. An amendment of the hours of trading on the lines suggested by Sir Hal Colebatch would be preferable to the hours suggested in the motion.

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

House adjourned at 4.50 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 16th April, 1942.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 11 a.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS (2)—CHARCOAL.

As to Supplies.

Mr. STUBBS asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Is it a fact that charcoal in large quantities will be required in the near future? 2, If so, is he aware that many farmers in the State will gladly produce same provided that the bags are made available and a fair price paid for the charcoal?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, Yes. 2, Bags are available from charcoal merchants. The price for charcoal to the pro-

ducers was recently increased from £5 10s. to £6 per ton, including cost of bags. Farmers willing to produce charcoal are invited to communicate with the Department of Emergency Road Transport, Public Works Department, Perth.

As to Employees' Pay.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Is there any award or registered agreement in existence for employees in the charcoal production trade? 2, If so, what are the rates for axemen, burners, other workers? 3, Has he ever been approached to have a wage fixed for this industry? 4, If so, by whom has the approach been made?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, No. 2, Answered by No. 1. 3, Yes. 4, The Australian Workers' Union. It is understood the union has experienced difficulty in organising the industry because of its rather scattered and isolated nature but the union recently filed an application for an agreement in the Court of Arbitration.

QUESTION—TRANSPORT.

As to Northam Camp Fares.

Mr. STYANTS asked the Minister for Works: 1, Does the Transport Board fix the fares charged by bus and taxi proprietors between Northam and the military camp, also between that campsite and Perth? 2, If so, what are the fares (a) for buses between Northam and the camp (single fare), (b) is permission given to charge an extra penny between No. 1 and No. 4 gates, (c) the return fare from the campsite to Perth? 3, What is the fare allowed to be charged for taxis (a) between Northam and the campsite (single fare), (b) between the campsite and Perth (return fare)? 4, Will the Transport Board take action to prevent charges being levied in excess of the amounts allowed?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, The Transport Board has fixed the fare chargeable by omnibus proprietors between Northam and the military camp. Taxi proprietors are not authorised to charge separate fares and the Transport Board has no control over their operations. Neither omnibus nor taxi proprietors are authorised to carry passengers at separate fares between the