

Following the publication of the prescribed notice in November last, 12 road boards signified their desire to hold their elections in April, 1943. These 12 boards were therefore omitted from the Order which postponed until April, 1944, the annual elections of the 115 other boards, which should have been held in April, 1942, and April, 1943. As previously mentioned, all road board annual elections due to have been held in April, 1942, were postponed until 1943; therefore the 12 boards which have resolved to hold their elections this year must, unless the law is altered, hold two elections on the same day—namely, the postponed annual election of 1942 and the annual election of 1943.

Numerous inquiries have been received by the Department from road boards regarding the position and, as some uncertainty exists as to when the terms of office will expire of the members elected in April next, it has been decided to submit the present Bill which embodies the same principle as contained in the Legislative Council (Postponement of Elections) Act, 1942, and provides that in April, 1943, there shall only be one election for the 12 boards which have decided to hold elections—namely, that which should ordinarily have been held in April, 1942; that the members so elected shall hold office for three years from April, 1943, and that the members who would ordinarily have retired in 1943 and 1944 shall have the terms of their office extended by one year—namely, until 1944 and 1945. Under the Road Districts Act, generally speaking, one-third of the members of any district retire annually and this desirable method will be preserved with the passing of the present Bill.

Referring to the 21 municipal councils, the general position is much the same as for road boards except that the elections are held on the fourth Saturday in November in each year. All municipal elections due to have been held in November, 1942, were postponed under National Security Regulations until the 30th January, 1943. Following the procedure prescribed in the Public Authorities (Postponement of Elections) Act, the Minister for Local Government published his intention of seeking the Governor's approval to a further extension to November, 1943.

A majority of the members of four councils—Albany, Midland Junction, Northam

and Narrogin—objected to their elections being postponed and the 1942 elections of these four were held on the 30th January, 1943. A petition was received, signed by more than 10 per cent. of the electors of one other municipality, objecting to the further postponement of their 1942 election and this particular election is to be held on the 1st May next. This extended time was necessary to enable the rolls—containing about 5,000 electors' names—to be prepared. This Bill, if approved, will preserve the system of rotation in regard to all municipal and road board elections. As it will be necessary for road boards holding elections in April to publicly call for nominations not later than the middle of next month, it is desirable that this Bill be given urgent approval by the House. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2.15 p.m. on Tuesday, the 2nd March.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 1.18 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 24th February, 1943.

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

MOTION—URGENCY.*As to Superphosphate Supplies.*

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received the following letter from the member for Pingelly:—

In view of the great uncertainty existing amongst farmers as to—

- (a) the rate of superphosphate per acre which they will be permitted to sow with wheat this season;
- (b) the greatly restricted and varying amounts of superphosphate being granted to farmers today;
- (c) their ability to meet their commitments through the curtailment of acreage;
- (d) the present delay in deliveries of superphosphate and the threatened further delay in deliveries by the railways;

I intend, with your permission, to move the adjournment of the House at today's sitting.

It will be necessary for seven members to rise in their places to support the proposal.

Seven members having risen in their places,

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly) [2.18]: I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

I make no apology for taking up the time of the House in moving this motion because this question of the supply of superphosphate for farmers is, I think, the outstanding trouble confronting them at the present time. I admit that the trouble has been brought about by the curtailment of the supply of phosphatic rock to Australia, and that in turn is one of the unfortunate consequences of the war. I am not blaming the Government for that. Farmers generally are not unreasonable in their attitude. They can, generally speaking, determine when they are receiving justice; and, even though something interferes with the following up of their ordinary activities, and, like all sections of the community, they may grumble to a certain extent, they still carry on. In the allotment of superphosphate they are not receiving fair play.

Members will recall that last year and the previous year, after seeding operations were finished and up to about the 30th June, farmers were advised by the Minister for Agriculture to buy more superphosphate and lay it by in their sheds. The reason given by the Minister was that, like other States, Western Australia was allotted a certain amount of superphosphate and there appeared to be a prospect that some of it would not be used during the year, and could be

carried forward. The Minister, therefore, adopted the attitude that if that superphosphate were not used the Phosphate Commission would say that Western Australia did not need so much superphosphate and would reduce the allotment accordingly. I disagreed with that view, and expressed the opinion at the time. It had certain weaknesses, and unfortunately one has revealed itself at the present time. That weakness, of course, is the ability of the financially strong man to secure all his requirements, leaving the unfortunate struggling farmer who has not the money to buy 12 months ahead to take up a lessened quantity this year. However, I will touch upon that subsequently. First of all I want to deal with that portion of my letter referring to the rate of superphosphate per acre which farmers will be permitted to sow with wheat this season. As stated by the Minister for Agriculture in reply to a question I asked a few weeks ago, a regulation is in existence which stipulates that the farmer must sow 40 lb. of superphosphate to the acre with his wheat.

We all know perfectly well that if superphosphate is not here we cannot use it. If there is sufficient to sow a million acres, obviously we cannot sow 2,000,000 acres. But the department has taken up the attitude of advising the farmer that, instead of curtailing his area, he must curtail the amount of superphosphate he uses per acre. Nobody is in a better position to determine what a farmer should do with his farm than the farmer himself. Generally speaking, farmers have been engaged on their properties for a number of years. They are men who do not throw this stuff about, because they know it costs money. Not only that, but they have also been advised by the Agricultural Department very wisely and capably in the past as to what is the best amount to sow. But I would point out to members who may not be so well versed in farming as I happen to be, and as others on these benches happen to be—some of whom possibly know more than I do about the subject—it is impossible to lay down the definite amount of superphosphate that should be used on a property.

There is no other State in Australia wherein the land varies to such a great and acute degree as it does in Western Australia. There may be a paddock where part of the land consists of heavy soil, almost

clay. At the other end of that paddock the land changes to what is practically sand. To tell a man that he must sow 40 lbs. per acre regardless of the quality of the soil is not reasonable. Not only that, but it is in complete variance with what the Agricultural Department has been preaching to the farmer for 15 or 20 years. I can hear the uninitiated say, "Let him put it on that type of land which is nearest suited to take 40 lbs. per acre." But the farmer does not work on those lines. His land was prepared six or seven months ago and he cannot turn round now and say, "I will put it into this particular paddock or that particular paddock, because it will give the best results."

Mr. Berry: Is there any land that will only need 40 lbs. to the acre?

Mr. SEWARD: I do not say that for one moment. I do not suggest that. The department makes that stipulation regardless altogether of what the land has yielded, or of the experience of the farmer himself who has kept records and can tell what yields he has obtained from any particular paddock over the time he has been on the farm, and the amount of seed and superphosphate used. The farmer is the only one who can say what results he is likely to secure from the application of 40 lbs. to the acre, and whether it will be sufficient. I would also point out that this year, when this reduced amount of sowing per acre is being advised, we are dealing with 18 per cent. and not 23 per cent. superphosphate, which has been the usual standard. I am aware that when the Minister answered my question a few weeks ago he unfortunately—I do not say intentionally—laid more emphasis on the fact that 23 per cent. was not the usual strength of superphosphate. But to all intents and purposes it is what we regard as the normal strength. This year, however, it is only 18 per cent., and consequently the results will be less satisfactory than if 23 per cent. superphosphate were used.

Many farmers have come to me and asked whether they may reduce their acreage and increase the amount of superphosphate. That is to say, if a man is allowed 4,000 lbs. of superphosphate and is told he has to sow 100 acres at 40 lbs. per acre, may he instead sow 50 acres with 80 lbs. of superphosphate? Surely that is a reasonable request. Yet the department has taken up the attitude that a man may not do that but must sow the 100

acres at 40 lbs. per acre. No farmer in this or any other State has any desire under present-day conditions, when there is such a scarcity of labour, to sow large areas with light dressings rather than small areas with heavier dressings of superphosphate. Without hesitation I can say from my own experience that in an ordinary season sowing 40 lbs. of superphosphate to the acre would lead to a tragedy in many instances. The fact is that the present is not an ordinary season. We have already had two, and in some places three, heavy downfalls of rain during the summer months. This will result in a copious crop of weeds on fallow land in particular. If the farmer is compelled to deal with the area he has prepared and cultivate it once or twice, following upon which he will do his sowing, he will experience a heavy growth of weeds, with the resultant complete failure of part of his crop, through being unable to do the work thoroughly. On that ground alone an alteration in the policy that prescribes the use of 40 lbs. of superphosphate to the acre is urgently called for in order to meet the peculiarities of the present season.

The next paragraph in my letter to Mr. Speaker refers to the greatly restricted and varying quantities of superphosphate being granted to farmers today. In that regard I may remind the House that last year the farmers were urged to buy large supplies of superphosphate in order to ensure that all that was allotted to Western Australia was utilised. Many of the farmers responded to that request and bought fairly heavily. That enabled the financially strong man to purchase sufficient to permit of adequate supplies being set aside for this year and probably for next year as well. From that standpoint the position was all right for the financially strong farmer, but the effect was to reduce the possibility of the financially weak man securing his normal ration of superphosphate. I have evidence in support of that contention. A few days ago I was talking to a farmer who said that he had accepted the advice that had been tendered by the Minister and purchased a considerable quantity of superphosphate. As the man had the funds enabling him to do so he would have been foolish had he not adopted that course. However, he subsequently wrote to the Agricultural

Department and asked to be informed as to what proportion of the superphosphate he had purchased he was able to use during the current season and the departmental officials could not answer his query. The result was that the man found himself in the position of being able to use the superphosphate in what proportion he liked. That has caused a lot of trouble and unrest amongst farmers generally. Some find that others have an abundance of superphosphate whilst they themselves have not sufficient to enable them to carry on. In support of that statement I shall read a letter I received from a farmer under date the 15th February in the course of which he said—

I am having trouble in regard to super for this season and thought you might be able to help me in this matter. I lodged an order in December last for 15 tons. That would be the least I could manage on for the amount I intended seeding. My wheat acreage license is for 264 acres and I wished to crop 150 acres of barley and from 100 to 200 acres of oats. However, I got a permit to purchase $1\frac{3}{4}$ tons of super, or only 21 bags. That amount is in my opinion absolutely ridiculous, as you can see.

I think that members will agree that that is ridiculous. The farmer continued—

I have written several times to the officer in charge of fertiliser rationing but they will not give me an increase. The position is this: If I cannot get a big increase on this amount, I will be forced out of business as it is just useless to try to carry on under these conditions. I would be wasting my time in attempting to carry on farming.

There seems to be a hold-up on account of super I had for last season's cropping. Last May I ordered a further six tons of super and eventually got a permit for $4\frac{1}{4}$ tons. I received the super too late for the last seeding—

As a matter of fact, he received that consignment in July.

—but had borrowed super to finish seeding and returned the $4\frac{1}{4}$ tons when it arrived. Therefore I have no super on hand. I pointed this out to the Department of Agriculture but it has not altered their decision. I understand the super is rationed on the amount during the 1939-40 season. I would point out that that was my first season and my finances would not permit me to crop more for the first season because I had a lot of expense in the way of seed wheat, horses, plant and chaff. I think this fact should be considered in the rationing.

I think members will agree that that should be so. The farmer communicated with the Department of Agriculture and explained his position. On the 10th February last

he received the following reply from the Under Secretary for Agriculture—

I have to hand your letter of the 1st February. I regret that you have received your full quota of superphosphate for this year's cropping. As you did not apply for a permit for the $4\frac{1}{4}$ tons last year until the 21st July, that must be included in your allowance for this year's cropping requirements.

I want to explain to the House the manner in which the superphosphate supplies are being apportioned out. As pointed out by the farmer whose letter I have just read, he ordered his requirements last year, but during his farming operations he realised he required further supplies and therefore he ordered an additional six tons in May. Eventually he was granted an extra $4\frac{1}{4}$ tons which came to hand in July. He could not wait till then to put in his crop with any hope of securing any reasonable results, and therefore at the appropriate time he borrowed his requirements from a neighbour who happened to have sufficient on hand to enable him to release the desired quantity. Probably that man did his topdressing in spring and so did not require the superphosphate when seeding. At any rate when the additional $4\frac{1}{4}$ tons came to hand in July, the farmer returned to his neighbour the quantity he had borrowed. This caused difficulties with the Agricultural Department, the officials of which said that he should have in his shed the $4\frac{1}{4}$ tons that had been delivered to him. Accordingly they supplied him with $1\frac{3}{4}$ tons which made up the total of six tons, the minimum quantity supplied to a farmer for the season. That meant the farmer was left with $1\frac{3}{4}$ tons of superphosphate with which to carry out his farming operations. Of course, the position was ludicrous.

The Premier: And exceptional.

Mr. SEWARD: No. In my district I know of three farmers who had cause to complain, and I took them to the department this year. The reduced supplies were such that they realised it was no use going on with their operations.

The Premier: That is three out of 500.

Mr. SEWARD: Other members may support me by quoting instances that have come under their notice.

The Premier: You have, say, 500 farmers in your district but only three complaints.

Mr. SEWARD: No. I have had other complaints as well and some of my col-

leagues will probably, in supporting my motion, give additional particulars.

The Premier: But there are not many out of 8,000 farmers.

Mr. SEWARD: I have received requests from the Corrigin, Kulin and Cuballing Road Boards to protest against the provision for 40 lbs. of superphosphate per acre being used by farmers. Those boards have received complaints from farmers in their respective districts. Another instance was brought under my notice of a farm that no-one is working and on which there has been no-one living for two or three years. Yet 32 tons of superphosphate were delivered to that farm.

Mr. Berry: Who owns the farm?

Mr. SEWARD: A financial company, not a bank.

Mr. Berry: Which financial company?

Mr. SEWARD: The property is owned by the A.M.P. Society. I do not blame that company, which would have been foolish had it not accepted the Minister's invitation to buy superphosphate supplies last year. Rather do I blame the Minister and the Government for sponsoring such a policy. If superphosphate was not used last year, any carry-over should have passed into the custody of the Government, and been held for use in conjunction with whatever other supplies were available for the following year. Had that been done, then the farmers generally would have received their supplies on an equal basis. I know of a farm which has been topdressed with $2\frac{1}{2}$ cwt. of superphosphate to the acre. I have quoted the instance of the farmer who asked the department how much of the supplies of superphosphate he had on hand could be used this season, and the department could not tell him. That man could have used the whole lot had he so desired. I certainly do not blame the farmers who purchased heavily in view of the possible shortage considering that the Minister urged them to buy superphosphate if they could do so. My protest is against the policy, which I said at the time, and still say, is wrong. Any carry-over at the end of the season should be carried forward to next year, so that the ultimate price of next year's superphosphate could be kept down and that superphosphate could be available to all on a like basis.

There is another aspect to this superphosphate rationing I wish to emphasise, because it leads to great injustice. As we all know,

it frequently happens that a farmer is not able to use exactly the amount of superphosphate that he receives. For the sake of argument, say he gets 20 tons annually, and when he is in the middle of his seeding the weather turns excessively wet so that he cannot get all his seeding done and has five tons of superphosphate over, and the five tons is put into his shed! Next year he buys only 15 tons, and with the five tons carried over he has 20 tons of superphosphate. That being the position, next season he gets only 60 per cent. of his 15 tons, representing his purchase for the preceding season.

The Premier: Is that usual?

Mr. SEWARD: Yes.

The Premier: I understand that the procedure is altogether different, that 40 lbs. of superphosphate is given for each acre the farmer is licensed to crop.

Mr. SEWARD: That is not so. The farmer gets a certain allotment, but it must not exceed 40 lbs. to the acre he is licensed to crop. I am sure that, if the Premier inquires further, the department will give him the same information as it gave me last week. The allowance is 60 per cent. of last year's purchase of superphosphate.

The Premier: My information is that 40 lbs. is allowed for each acre the farmer is allowed to crop on the restricted basis.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Sixty per cent. of last year's purchase.

Mr. SEWARD: But regardless of whether it is the average annual amount purchased. That is causing a great deal of unrest and concern amongst the farming community, because the farmer finds that he can get only 60 per cent. of his actual purchases of the previous year, whereas his next door neighbour gets 60 per cent. of his usual requirements because he used the whole lot in the previous season. I hope the Premier will take the matter up, because rank injustice is being done to the farmers and is so reducing their crops as to affect seriously their carrying-on.

The third reason I gave in my letter is the farmer's inability to meet his commitments through the curtailment of acreage. Members will recollect that under the policy of restriction of the growing of wheat, Western Australia alone among the States had its acreage reduced by 33 per cent. The farmer is to be recompensed, I understand—and very shortly too, I hope—at the rate of 12s. per acre for the reduced production. But under the superphosphate

rationing business there will be further curtailment of the acreage sown, and that curtailment probably will very seriously embarrass farmers in meeting their commitments. If that is the position, they are entitled to receive some further consideration. It is not right that the farmer should wait for the end of the season's operations, knowing full well that with the restricted area caused by curtailment in the supply of superphosphate he cannot meet his commitments. Then, apparently, he can go along cap in hand, a mendicant, to his creditors for relief.

This matter should be taken up now, at the beginning of the season, so that some of the creditors may be made to accept some part of the burden cast on the farmer by reason of the lack of superphosphate—one of the effects of the war. I notice that the Government's expert officers—and we place a great deal of reliance on them, which they are entitled to receive—state that if 40 lbs. is applied to this year's curtailed acreage, the farmer will get a 90 per cent. growth. What about the Government backing up its expert officers and saying to the farmer, "If you sow 40 lbs. of superphosphate to the acre, we will guarantee you the guaranteed price per bushel of wheat for every bushel by which you fail to reach your average crop for the last five or six years"? That is only a fair thing to ask.

The Premier: And if owing to fortuitous circumstances the farmer gets a bit more than the average, he will hand over that margin to the Government?

Mr. SEWARD: The Premier could not expect that. If the hon. gentleman accepts my suggestion, it will be an excellent testimonial to the value of the expert advice given by the Government's officers. The last paragraph of my letter refers to the present delay in deliveries of superphosphate, with consequent further delays threatened by the Railway Department. This is a very serious matter indeed. We are faced with late deliveries, at present amounting to about three weeks. That is nothing unusual. But the delay is much more serious this year than it was in past years, owing to the depleted state of our rollingstock. Some of our rollingstock has been taken over by the Commonwealth for war activities. In addition, the locomotives which we have been using are being so heavily used that if they have to deal with a congestion of superphosphate,

which threatens seriously, then the farmers of this State will have no chance of getting their supplies delivered.

The Premier: If there is congestion, still we have to deal with only half as much.

Mr. SEWARD: The rush will be all the greater because of the congestion. From that aspect early action is absolutely necessary. The only other matter I wish to touch on is the question of the contingency pool. That is a most misleading thing. I believe it has been the cause of much of the trouble in sending out the superphosphate, as the result of not delivering it out to the farmers on a set basis, so much per acre, or whatever it may be. However, when it is allotted on a set basis, and the farmers are told that a contingency pool has been established to supplement deliveries to certain growers, an atmosphere of suspicion is created. That atmosphere is largely prevalent at the present time. The growers were notified that, I think, ten per cent. of the superphosphate available would be held in a contingency pool, and that if, for the sake of argument, a farmer for top-dressing or something like that desired a little more superphosphate, he could apply for it to the contingency pool and get it.

The Premier: He would have to be justified in making his application.

Mr. SEWARD: Yes. I agree with that. I know of one farmer who had 240 acres of clover. He sowed his place down with 240 acres of clover in past years, and he has been top-dressing that clover every year since. He has some superphosphate on hand. We have had two rains during this summer at Pingelly, the last being 1½ inches, so that practically all his clover has germinated and he wants to topdress it. If he is to topdress his clover, he wants to know whether he will get some superphosphate from the contingency pool so that he can use it for his cereals. He accordingly made a request to the Department of Agriculture and received the following reply, dated the 30th January:—

I acknowledge receipt of your application for fertiliser supplies which was received at this department on 22nd January, 1943. I regret to advise that it will not be possible to make an immediate allocation to you as the closing date for applications for the first superphosphate pool was the 31st December, 1942.

This pool has now been completed and it will therefore be necessary to defer consideration of your application until such time as the

Contingency Pool is in operation. When this is the case your application will be reviewed and you will be notified accordingly.

That is absolutely useless to this man. He cannot use the superphosphate he has in his shed to topdress now on the chance that it will be replaced from the contingency pool between the present time and the time when he sows his cereals. He wants a decision now. This pool business is all wrong and should never have been instituted. Suppose, for the sake of argument, we have 500,000 tons of superphosphate in this State to distribute! I say, distribute the whole of it on a set basis; do not keep back 50,000 or 100,000 tons to be given out here, there and everywhere; because, naturally, when a farmer makes a deliberate request such as that to which I have referred and is refused, and later the superphosphate is given to somebody else, he wants to know how that person got it. That breeds an atmosphere of suspicion and militates against the easy overcoming of what is already a difficult matter.

I desire to touch on only one other aspect, and that is the experts' contention that 40 lbs. of superphosphate is sufficient in view of the residue remaining in the soil after the previous year. That may be so in the case of a drought year. After such a year, naturally, a great deal of superphosphate, in varying quantities, remains in the soil.

Mr. Patrick: Particularly if you have been continually topdressing a paddock for several years with heavy quantities of fertiliser.

Mr. SEWARD: That is so. Last year, however, was not a drought year; it was a very wet year in many parts of the State. Apart from that aspect, a farmer cannot at this stage of the season say what particular paddock he intends to crop. He may have certain paddocks that have been heavily topdressed and in which much superphosphate may be left; but his fallow is prepared and that is the part of the farm he is going to crop. It is impossible to lay down a definite rule that a farmer shall do with 40 lbs. of superphosphate to the acre regardless of the many influences that tend to decide the matter for him. For these reasons I have brought forward the motion standing in my name.

MR. BOYLE (Avon): I second the motion. I regret that it should be necessary to bring it forward. It appears to me—

and I do not say that the Government is responsible—that the present unfortunate circumstances have been brought about because our main sources of supply of phosphatic rock are not now in our hands. I refer to the supplies from Nauru. If it is intended seriously to grow a crop this year in Western Australia, then the present regulation is the best way to make the attempt a farce and a tragedy for the farmers putting in the crop.

Mr. Marshall: Is not the regulation Commonwealth-wide?

Mr. BOYLE: I understand that it has been left largely to the Departments of Agriculture of the various States to determine the quantities.

Mr. Patrick: That is so.

Mr. BOYLE: Another factor must be taken into account. Western Australia is a superphosphate-using State. Much of the land farmed today in this State would be useless without heavy dressings of superphosphate. Our farmers are now asked to sow a maximum of 40 lbs. of superphosphate to the acre, whereas I know from personal experience with a first-class superphosphate—Cresco—that 112 lbs. to the acre on certain types of land—our light soil—is not more than sufficient to obtain a crop. I have experimented with lesser quantities of dressings, and can assure the House that this proposed 40 lbs. to the acre will only result in tragic losses to the farmers, irrespective of the kind of season we get.

Mr. Berry: It will result in chaos.

Mr. BOYLE: The Premier told the member for Pingelly that there are 8,000 wheat-growers in the State and that the complaints made were perhaps not very convincing.

The Premier: I said the member for Pingelly referred to an exceptional case.

Mr. BOYLE: Quite so, but the fact remains that that farmer today has entered into obligations to crop an area one-third less than his normal area. That represents, so to speak, a compulsory writing-down of his area. In addition, after he has entered into obligations with his lieenees to crop his land, he is now told that he can use only 40 lbs. of superphosphate to the acre. The cost per acre of putting in and taking off a wheat crop averages about 30s. Obviously, if the farmer has entered into an undertaking with merchants, banks or companies to put a certain area under wheat, he is now faced with a restriction of 40 lbs. of super-

phosphate to the acre. The Federal Royal Commission on Wheat, in its report in 1935, stated that the belated discovery of superphosphate was a factor of vital importance in wheatgrowing. It was indeed. It brought Western Australia into the forefront of wheatgrowing in Australia. It placed this State amongst the four exporting States of the Commonwealth. At one period wheat represented 58 per cent. of the total value of exports of Western Australia. Now the acreage to be sown has been reduced by one-third and our total yield has been reduced from 37,000,000 bushels per year to 21,000,000 bushels last year.

I am not a Jeremiah, but I venture the opinion that if farmers are to be permitted to use only 40 lbs. of superphosphate per acre, our wheat yield will fall to five bushels per acre. I doubt whether we will get a 10,000,000 bushel yield under those conditions. We are putting under crop 1,800,000 acres this year; that is our allowance. The cost to the wheatgrower of 30s. to the acre would therefore amount to about £2,700,000. That is the potential debt, assuming that we get a 10,000,000 bushel yield. At 4s. a bushel the farmers would get back £2,000,000. Therefore we are asking the 8,000 wheatgrowers of this State to start in a race in which we can confidently assume they will lose further to the extent of £700,000 or £800,000.

Mr. Marshall: Will the farmer get enough to pay his interest bill?

Mr. Thorn: He never has had enough.

Mr. Marshall: The interest is all that matters these days.

Mr. BOYLE: The interest bill has nothing to do with this particular question. However, the interest bill is about 1s. per bushel.

Mr. Berry: One shilling and a penny.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I do not think we had better touch on that aspect.

Mr. BOYLE: No.

Mr. Marshall: It interests me.

Mr. BOYLE: It interests the 8,000 farmers who are putting in their crops. Another factor we must bear in mind is that the phosphoric acid content of superphosphate this year has been reduced from 22 per cent. to 18 per cent. If we have only 18 per cent. phosphoric acid content we shall have tragedy heaped upon tragedy. Not only is the quantity to be reduced to 40 lbs. per acre, but there is prac-

tically a 20 per cent. reduction in the phosphoric acid content of the superphosphate. The worst feature is that officialdom has refused farmers the right to use their discretion in the quantity of superphosphate used per acre besides reducing the acreage to be sown. I do not ask farmers to defy a regulation of the Agricultural Department; if members did that sort of thing they would be stultifying themselves. But the regulation acts harshly on our farmers today. They have been working with a shortage of manpower and under difficulties almost impossible to overcome. There has been an increase in the price of their normal requirements, including superphosphate, of 25 per cent. Before the war superphosphate was under £4 per ton; it is now about £6. To all these things is now added this foolish regulation, which limits the quantity of superphosphate for topdressing to 40 lbs. per acre. It is not my intention to delay the House, but I wish to refer to the matter of topdressing, because this makes it possible—especially in the Great Southern districts—for the farmer to run stock successfully. That in itself is another question. In the circumstances, I hope the motion will be carried and that the Government will pay heed to it.

MR. BERRY (Irwin-Moore): I do not wish to delay the House, but I desire to state that I am in full agreement with the motion. Definitely, there are some points which should be adjusted. We are all aware that we are in a state of war and faced with all sorts of problems, for the solution of which we must devise ways and means. This problem of superphosphate is not the least of these problems. The member for Avon mentioned that the main sources of supply—Nauru, Ocean Island and Christmas Island—are not now in our hands. But the main point is, why restrict our farmers to 40 lbs. of super to the acre? Why not say to them, "You have a certain quantity of superphosphate; we do not care how you use it so long as you use it for the purpose for which it was supplied to you?" We have known for years past that the residual value of superphosphate is negligible. Yet today we are told that there is a wonderful residual value in the topdressing of the past.

Believe me, there is not much available superphosphate left; and as far as Western Australia is concerned, superphosphate is our agricultural life-blood. There is no gain-

saying that. In my own case, I have seen a flock of sheep grow on my property from 900 to 2,500 or 2,600, and that was due to the topdressing of the pastures, and liberal topdressing at that; not 40 lbs. to the acre and not 60 lbs. or 80 lbs., but one cwt. to the acre. We are told that was the amount which would give us the best pasture results. Most members associated with wheat growing have tried various quantities, and I do not think I am wrong in saying that the farmers have discovered one cwt. to the acre to be essential to achieve that proper efficiency for which the city has clamoured, and which it has accused the farmer so often of not maintaining. Yet we are now told to apply 40 lbs. to one acre. Let the farmers, if they are to be restricted because superphosphate is not available, apply it as they think fit and not as a crowd of nincompoops in the city considers best!

We had the Scully scheme a little while ago, and many of us welcomed it because its purpose was to aid the small farmer. But what is the position of the small farmer today? He is restricted to such an extent that where he cannot hold a stock of superphosphate he is unable to get the quota allotted under that scheme. As a consequence, if this 40 lbs. to the acre is persisted in, the Scully scheme might as well be dumped. Small farmers assure me, and not in any Bolshevistic strain, but with fear in their hearts, that at the end of this year they will have to leave their holdings. There is no economic reason for that if a commonsense attitude is adopted which would solve this problem and obviate this motion. We have a low-grade superphosphate in this State. I believe we are going to develop it, but it takes a long time to do anything here. It was mentioned in this Chamber two years ago, and I mentioned it to the departments at that time. I said, "Let us get the low-grade superphosphate from the Abrolhos Islands and the Recherche Archipelago." I was told that it was of so poor a grade that it was not worth while, but today we go to Egypt and import from that country the lowest grade of superphosphate that the world possesses. I know that investigations are being carried out at the moment. Let us speed something up for a change. What a change it would be if we could only do something with expedition and commonsense!

I personally am fed to the back teeth with the dilly-dallying and procrastination that

take place, and with the arguments advanced by people who should know better. If we have that rock, then for the love of Heaven let us go and get it, if we are honest, and if we are not honest, let us say so. Again, on this question as to stocks of superphosphate, why did the powers that be say, "You need not declare anything under 10 tons?" It was another pin-prick to the unfortunate small man who is not in a position to hold six to nine tons of superphosphate. The big man holds his nine tons and his 90 tons, and the bigger his holding is and the more money he has to finance that reserve, the better for him. There are many cases in Western Australia today where the small man with a family has six tons to provide for himself and family, and the big man responsible for the same number of persons has 30 to 40 tons. That is our democracy—a rotten, smelling, silly democracy—and it comes up every time. We had it in the last war and we still have it. If a man has money, he is the king-pin, but if he is the little man, then God help him! That is the case with this superphosphate.

One point was raised by the member for Pingelly with which I am not in agreement because of the information I have received. I refer to the contingency pool. I am given to understand that the superphosphate was allotted on the permits issued, but that it was found last year and again this year that many farmers did not exercise the prerogative contained in those permits. They did not apply for the superphosphate, for various reasons—some came to the city seeking employment in munition works or other factories—and if farmers had any brains they would all come to the city to get decent conditions and pay—and others came to get other employment, while still others joined the Army and so did not exercise their prerogative. In consequence, there is this contingency pool. If they all exercised their permit rights, there would be no contingency pool, and it is from that pool, I am given to understand, that the farmers can make application for an extra quantity for the purpose of topdressing. That is not quite what the member for Pingelly stated, but it is what I am told is the position. I do not think the mistake is in the department, but initially in taking a dictatorial attitude; the city dictating to the farmer—and if the farmer had any brains he would come to the

city and box someone's ears for adopting that attitude. I have been told by bank managers that they know more about farming than I do.

The Minister for Mines: They are probably right.

Mr. BERRY: They have never farmed, and never will. How would you like it, Mr. Speaker, if we all stood up here and told you your business? We do, occasionally.

Mr. Marshall: That is very easy to do!

Mr. BERRY: That is the only contribution I have to make on this debate. Please, Mr. Speaker, if you have any influence with this Government, tell it to use some common-sense and allow the farmer to farm as he thinks best with a limited quantity of superphosphate. He will accept the position as he has accepted other dicta on the war position. He has not fallen down once. We are appealing for this matter to be dealt with and adjusted so that the farmer can carry on and, at the end of the year, stand up and pay his way.

If the creditors are going to exploit this position, I hope some of the forecasts being made about what the soldiers will do when they return after the war will come true. It is an atrocious thing! The income of the man on the land for the next year is down to so low a figure that it is up to the Government to be sympathetic and sensible in this matter. I believe the forecast of the member for Avon to be correct. Last year we had a fairly good year, but we were not then suffering under so many restrictions as we are now. These men should be told that they have a certain amount of superphosphate, and to use it how they like. Every man should be made to divulge exactly how many tons of superphosphate he has on his holding over and above this year's limit. It should be distributed so that every man and family get a fair go. Then we may say that there is such a thing as democracy and not just the "mockrasy" part of it.

THE PREMIER: I do not quite know the object of the member for Pingelly in moving this motion. There has been no constructive criticism except to say that 40 lbs. of superphosphate to the acre is too little, and that the department was not quite right. The department went into the whole question and, as a result of discussions with the Hon. Leslie Craig and Mr. Prater, secretary of the Primary Producers' Asso-

ciation, and others, the various difficulties and many aspects of the matter were pointed out, and it was decided what could be done under the absolutely exceptional circumstances, which could not be avoided. As the member for Avon said, we all know that because Nauru and Ocean Island have been denied us as places from which to get superphosphate, we have had to go to other parts of the world and, on top of that, it is very difficult to get shipping. Because of that fact, we have made arrangements for supplies of pyrites in this State to take the place of sulphur so as to make the contents of the phosphatic rock soluble, and so that it can be used. We know that the quality of the phosphatic rock from where we now get it, Egypt, is not nearly so good as was the exceptionally good grade of rock from Ocean Island and Nauru.

But it all boils down to this: What is the best thing to be done in the very exceptional circumstances? A fairly large number of factors were considered and debated to see what could be done in the best interests of the State. Experiments over the years gone by have demonstrated that for most classes of land in Western Australia an average of 80 to 90 lbs. of superphosphate per acre should be applied. There is an opinion, backed by experiments, that for the first year after fairly heavy applications of superphosphate have been made, the residual value of the phosphatic content has a considerable influence on the next crop.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That is a new discovery.

Mr. Berry: We have never heard of it.

Mr. Doney: You are correct in what you say.

The PREMIER: I have been talking from my own knowledge.

Mr. Patrick: It depends on the previous dressings.

The PREMIER: Yes. One thing seems to be certain, that for the first year after continued applications have been made of superphosphate, better results will be achieved than if 40 lbs. had been applied all the time.

Mr. Berry: Why were we not told that five or six years ago?

The PREMIER: The department encouraged farmers to use as much superphosphate as the land would absorb, because with the addition of an extra 15 or 20 lbs. to

the acre another bushel or two might be gained.

Mr. Mann: You want to farm on the light land.

The PREMIER: I do not go about with my eyes and ears closed altogether.

Mr. Mann: Do you know the results?

The PREMIER: It is the experience of the farmer, knowing the value of his own land, under his own conditions, which determines what is best, but that does not get away from the fact that experiments have shown that the residual value of phosphate after heavy applications have been made has a big influence on the crop. The department has been consistently exhorting farmers to use fairly large quantities of superphosphate, because an extra 20 or 30 lbs. to the acre costs very little to put on and another bushel or two easily pays for it. Of course it depends on the quality of the land. Farmers in New Zealand use up to 3 cwt. of superphosphate per acre on good volcanic soil. The position in this State at the present time is such that, on account of war-caused circumstances, we cannot get the quantity of superphosphate we require. This is a basic fact that nobody can deny. Now the question arises, what can we do to make the best of the available supply?

Mr. Warner: Crop one-half and save wearing out the machinery. That is the proper method.

The PREMIER: I have had some experience and I know that in my district, if a farmer does not cultivate certain land for a couple of years, there will be a forest of timber up to eight or 10 feet high. We have a responsibility to people who have an asset in land that they have cleared and developed. Instead of asking them merely to plough the land to keep down quick-growing timber, we say they should crop it and get something out of it. Is not that sensible?

Mr. Warner: It would be better to crop one-half.

The PREMIER: If a farmer cropped one-half, he would get only half the return, and in a couple of years the unused half would be back almost to the condition of forest country. The suckers would be six feet or eight feet high. I have seen this happen on some of the land belonging to the member for Greenough. The present position is one which nobody could have foreseen and which nobody could have obviated. We require 300,000 tons of superphosphate and we are

getting about 100,000 tons. The question arises, what are we going to do?

Mr. Patrick: Give it to the farmer and let him use it to the best advantage.

The PREMIER: That might be all very well in one way, but we have to consider the theory about the residual value of the superphosphate in the land. The opinion of the departmental officials is that with the residual value, there is a probability—they do not say a certainty—that 40 lbs. of superphosphate per acre put on land heavily supered in previous years will give 75 to 80 per cent. of an ordinary crop, whereas 80 to 90 lbs. of superphosphate put on half the land will return only about 50 per cent. of the crop.

Mr. Boyle: But farmers have been skimping superphosphate for the last three years.

The PREMIER: Not through lack of supplies; probably through lack of finance. So there we have a simple sum in arithmetic.

Mr. Doney: Where do you get your authority for saying that, by using 40 lbs. of superphosphate to the acre, the farmer will get a 75 per cent. crop?

The PREMIER: That is the estimate of departmental advisers who have had experience of experimental plots. Let me quote from this report—

Further experiments commenced on the research stations in 1941 indicate that the superphosphate applied with the crops grown in the intervening period has reduced the most payable rates to amounts ranging from 60 lbs. at Merredin to 85 lbs. at Wongan Hills. It may be noted that the experiments at Chapman failed to give conclusive results, but indicate that even smaller applications of superphosphate will give optimum results on this station at the present time.

Mr. Doney: Those results obtained on experimental farms do not work out in ordinary farming.

The PREMIER: That is the only way to put a check on the theory.

In comparison with the crop grown with 1 cwt. superphosphate in 1941 and 1942, the yield of wheat sown without any superphosphate at all on old, well-cultivated, previously well fertilised land ranged from 70 per cent. at Wongan Hills to over 90 per cent. at Merredin. With small applications at seeding, the yield was definitely increased.

That is the result of close experimentation even when no superphosphate at all was used. On formerly heavily fertilised land, they got a 75 per cent. crop. Is it better to have a 75 per cent. crop by using 40 lbs. of

superphosphate per acre than a 50 per cent. crop by putting the usual quantity of superphosphate on half the acreage?

Mr. Warner: The officials might have had 150 lbs. of superphosphate on that plot in the year before they made the test.

The PREMIER: Perhaps so. We want to grow as much wheat as we can and we want to keep as much land as possible cultivated.

Mr. Warner: You have to save manpower, too.

The PREMIER: The question of manpower does not enter here.

Mr. Warner: The farmer has to watch the manpower position.

The PREMIER: The farmer has to stay on his farm and, if he has nothing else to do, it would not hurt him to plough up a few acres of land. As I have said, the departmental officials have got down to this arithmetical conclusion that it is better to get a 75 per cent. crop by using 40 lbs. of superphosphate to the acre than a 50 per cent. crop by using only half the acreage. This determination was not reached lightly, and the position would not have arisen but for the fact that we cannot get the full quantity of superphosphate required. It is a question of what is the best to be done.

Reference was made by the member for Pingelly to varying quantities of superphosphate being supplied to various farmers. There is no variation in the principles. A man in some instances might get 60 per cent. of his former requirements. In other instances, I am advised that when a farmer is allowed by license to crop a certain area, he is granted 40 lbs. per acre for that area.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That is not the practice.

The PREMIER: That is one of the factors to determine the quantity.

Mr. Patrick: Only one of the factors.

The PREMIER: The hon. member stated that the quantity varies, that some farmers were getting more and some less and that there is dissatisfaction owing to these variations, apparently for no reason except favouritism. While the quantity varies, the principles on which the superphosphate is allocated are well defined and do not vary. That is my information from the department. The next point in regard to ability to meet commitments I dealt with in the first place. It is better to get 75 per cent. of crop than half a crop and leave the rest of the land out of cultivation.

Coming now to the railway standpoint, the department at this time of the year always goes thoroughly into the question of superphosphate. When I was Minister for Railways we initiated propaganda to get farmers to order their supplies early, but they wanted delivery about the middle of April. This meant that they could take the superphosphate straight into the paddocks and drill it in without further handling. After extensive propaganda, the farmers ordered their superphosphate earlier, though there were some additional problems of finance which caused delay. Following this procedure the department this year conferred with the superphosphate firms and the Department of Agriculture and—I do not know whether I ought to give these figures—instead of 170,000 tons being sent out by rail as was done last year, the quantity is down to 100,000 tons.

Mr. Patrick: I thought it was only 90,000 tons.

The PREMIER: It is a little over 100,000 tons. At the rate of 8,000 tons a week which the Railway Department assures me it can transport, the whole of the requirements of superphosphate to the extent of 100,000 tons, provided it is ordered and everything goes as expected—that is about two-thirds of the usual quantity—will be in the hands of the farmers by the 1st May. That is the department's programme, and the 8,000 is being transported weekly now. There is no reason to think that that quantity will not be maintained. Some of it will be delivered earlier, but at the latest it should be in the hands of the farmers by the 1st May.

The hon. member also said something about pool contingencies. That is for priority crops, which include potatoes, vegetables, flax, tobacco, navy beans and blue boiler peas. Some producers were unfortunately shut out, or for some reason did not put in their applications. There was a case in my own district; the member for Greenough will recognise the individual. This farmer usually purchased about six tons of superphosphate. He died last October. During the two or three months in which the estate was being settled, the matter of ordering superphosphate was overlooked, and the widow wrote me a letter which I received eight or ten days ago stating that she wanted six tons of superphosphate and asking what I could do to help her. The Department of Agriculture says that it might be able to find the superphosphate she needs

out of the contingency pool. That is an exceptional case. These things, however, do occur in the ordinary course of events, and the contingency pool has been established and will be utilised to meet such cases as well as to provide for priority crops.

Mr. Doney: Do you think there will be a priority pool worth mentioning this time?

The PREMIER: The pool amounts to about 10,000 tons. The report states—

Towards the end of June, 1942, the State quota of superphosphate was allocated to Western Australia by the Commonwealth Government and was announced at 120,000 tons. Out of this 120,000 tons, some 12,000 tons were immediately set aside for the use of priority crops which, on the advice of the Commonwealth Government, were to receive as near as possible 100 per cent. of their normal dressings.

This left a balance of 10,000 tons of which 10 per cent. was to be reserved as a contingency pool, leaving approximately 97,000 tons for all crops other than priorities.

Mr. Perkins: The department told me yesterday that it had already allotted the contingency pool because of extra orders that have come in.

The PREMIER: There is this to be said about these particular priorities. We may be asked to grow a very considerable quantity of vegetables, navy beans, etc., and also to make arrangements for an increased acreage of flax, and it may be that this increased production will be regarded as a first essential so far as war requirements are concerned, and so naturally a certain amount of superphosphate will have to be allotted for those purposes.

Mr. Doney: From the contingency pool?

The PREMIER: Yes, for there is no other place from which to get it. Then there are the other people, such as the widow I have mentioned, whose requirements could only come out of the contingency pool, if they were met at all. The member for Irwin-Moore may be able to speak of farmers who would ordinarily use 1,000 tons of superphosphate, and would still use it if they could get it. A quantity of 10,000 tons is not very much to cover all these priorities. Big acreages are not involved and large quantities of superphosphate are not required by the individual but, when a lot of people want small quantities, the total mounts up. Nevertheless those people are able to do something with respect to the vital production of vegetables. In Geraldton producers used to grow between £80,000 and £90,000 worth of tomatoes

every year. They are very concerned about their superphosphate requirements, and about getting supplies of potash. When potash is added to the fertiliser they can grow tomatoes and keep them at just on the ripe stage, and carry them for a fortnight or three weeks before they get over-ripe.

Mr. Thorn: The distribution of fertilisers to vegetable growers is a matter that requires careful investigation. A lot of abuse is going on there.

The PREMIER: The member for Pingelly asks, "Why have a contingency fund; why not allocate the superphosphate to everyone who wants it according to his ration?" The member for Toodyay says there are vegetable growers and other producers who also want superphosphate. We cannot say on the spur of the moment how much fertiliser is required and in what increased quantity it is required.

Mr. Thorn: The fruitgrowers are being left out in the cold.

The PREMIER: The hon. member thinks they are not getting any fertiliser.

Mr. Thorn: Very little.

The PREMIER: They are getting some. The reason for the debate is to point out that everyone who wants fertiliser is getting comparatively little of it. Actually they are getting little less than 40 per cent. of their requirements. That, of course, would be calamitous in ordinary circumstances, but I point out that we are facing the calamitous circumstances of a war. This shortage cannot be helped, and we have to do the best we can in all the circumstances. The department counsels people to do what they think is best. If it is the consensus of opinion deliberately and responsibly given that it would be a long way better for the agricultural section of the community, that the farmers instead of having 40 lbs. of fertiliser to the acre upon which to grow a crop, were to be placed in a position to use available supplies in any quantity per acre they liked then, if that is a responsible utterance on behalf of the farming community of Western Australia, this Government would be prepared to listen to it and give it every consideration.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That is undoubtedly the practical approach.

The PREMIER: Notwithstanding that an order has been made in regard to the matter, if it can be demonstrated that that is the

best thing to do in the interests of the farming community, the Government is not going to be adamant.

Mr. Perkins: No other State has given such an instruction to farmers as the department has given.

The PREMIER: I could agree with that. I point out, however, that the peculiar circumstances of our State and the relative importance of the wheatgrowing industry to the State, and also the necessity for keeping our lands in a cultivable condition, makes the problem different from that which exists in the other States. So many people here have so much land and play such a big part in the general economy of the State that we greatly desire to maintain the agricultural community in such a condition that will enable us after the war, when there is bound to be a tremendous demand for wheat and other produce, effectively to undertake the production of those commodities. If we do not serve these people, they will not be on the land to do that when the time comes. The land will have become overgrown, and we will not be able to take our place in providing for the anticipated increased production during the period which I hope will be a prosperous one for all our primary producers, namely when hostilities have ceased. On behalf of the Government I say that if the Opposition will take the responsibility of urging that this policy which we have advocated and to a certain extent promulgated be reviewed with the idea of allowing farmers to exercise their own discretion concerning the quantity of superphosphate they use per acre—

Mr. Patrick: We will assume that responsibility all right.

The PREMIER: The hon. member may be sorry, but I hope he is not.

Mr. Patrick: I would take it on myself.

The PREMIER: That will be the position, and I will be prepared to discuss it along those lines.

Mr. Watts: Subject to one condition, which I will state when you have finished your remarks.

The PREMIER: We wish to adopt a reasonable attitude in regard to this question. Like members opposite we want to do the best we can for the country and particularly for those concerned in agricultural production in regard to this problem. If,

as a result of the experience many members have had, plus our departmental experience, we can evolve something that is in the best interests of the State, and something that will be truly worth while, this Government will take every opportunity to have a conference held so that the interests of all concerned may be fully considered and, when considered, a decision reached in the light of the consensus of opinion and the wisdom of all the members of this Parliament. I assure the House that the railway position will be all right. Farmers may absolutely rely upon getting their superphosphate at the end of April or during the first week in May, which is quite soon enough for the majority of them to get it.

MR. WATTS (Katanning): What the Premier has said in the last few minutes has reduced considerably that which I had intended to say. There are still, however, one or two matters to which I would like to refer. The first is in regard to the interjection I made, "Subject to one condition," when the Premier was referring to the concurrence of this side of the House in the giving of discretion to farmers as to the use of the limited quantity of superphosphate available to them. It should be made quite clear to members that farmers for the last two years have been strictly regulated as to the quantity of wheat they could sow. When the stabilisation scheme was formed it was not a question of saying, "I want to grow 400 acres or some other area." The farmer was obliged to put in a return showing the actual area of wheat grown for the seasons 1937-38, 1938-39, 1939-40, and 1940-1941. If he planted 100 acres in the first year, 200 acres in the second, 300 acres in the third, and 400 acres in the fourth, the total of these was added together and divided by four, and he got a license for the resultant figure. In consequence, in the circumstances I have mentioned and on the figures I gave, he would have got a license for 250 acres. In such a case—and there were many—the 250 acres were considerably less than the farmer had been planting in the last two years of the period, because in all probability he had been in the developmental stage. However, he was given a license on that calculation, known as the basic figure, to plant 250 acres.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Was that not reduced by one third?

Mr. WATTS: I am coming to that. The position was as I have stated when the stabilisation scheme was commenced some two years ago and the first licenses were issued. Following upon that, for the cropping year just finished one-third of the acreage was deducted, so that the man who had 250 acres to plant found himself with approximately only 160 acres. He has been issued with superphosphate, which presumably he must have used at the rate of 40 lbs. per acre, if the ukase of the Agricultural Department were to stand, on that 160 acres. We have come to the conclusion that it may be desirable, instead of the farmer planting 160 acres and using 40 lbs. per acre of superphosphate, which he thinks is a waste of seed, machinery and manpower in view of the small dressing of fertiliser he is able to give, he should be able to exercise his discretion. The farmer may then find himself obliged later on to make some fresh application to the stabilisation scheme, which will take into consideration not the 160 acres he ought to have planted but the 80, 90 or 100 acres he actually planted because of the shortage of superphosphate and because he used his discretion as to the dressing of superphosphate. If this year he were to plant 100 acres and not 160, his stabilisation figure would be still further reduced, although it would have been no fault of his that he could not get sufficient to enable him to plant a larger area.

It is essential in subscribing to this proposal that the farmer should be allowed to use his own discretion in regard to such superphosphate as he can obtain, with which I am in agreement, but we should also obtain an assurance from the Commonwealth Government, which is dealing with this matter, that in the event of an area less than the licensed area being planted this year, because of the shortage of superphosphate, that will not be used further to minimise the licensed area at a later date. This is a matter upon which the State Government could well approach the Commonwealth Government. If it were laid down in any negotiations between the Commonwealth and State Ministers there would be no difficulty in arriving at the state of affairs we desire. There may be a different period of years taken into account over which licenses are issued later on. If the Government is prepared to take that matter in hand I am prepared to say there is no doubt

the farmers in question should be allowed to use their discretion with any superphosphate supplies they can get.

In support of that contention I suggest that the Commonwealth Government is unlikely to refuse any reasonable approach. It is quite clear that although the Commonwealth Government has control exercised through National Security Regulations—again derived from its defence powers under the Constitution—it is willing to allow the States to have a very great measure of control. It is because it is prepared to allow and has allowed the State in this particular instance a great measure of control, that this difficulty has arisen, because it has not been done in the Eastern States. I have correspondence from New South Wales and Victoria, and both letters ridicule the idea that there should be a limitation of 40 lbs. to the acre. There is a limitation as to the quantity that can be bought. Undoubtedly there is a ration. One can only get a maximum in Victoria of 55 per cent. of the superphosphate used in the base year, 1941-42, but when the superphosphate has been secured it does not matter in the slightest how the man deals with it. When the Minister for Agriculture on the 21st January answered questions on the subject, he gave the impression that farmers were actually compelled to use only 40 lbs. of superphosphate to the acre with wheat. He was asked—

Is there a regulation which will compel wheatgrowers to sow 40 lbs. of superphosphate with wheat sown during the coming season?

He answered, "The National Security (Fertiliser Control) Regulations," etc. When a question is answered one must take the question into consideration with the answer, and from the answer given in this instance one had to assume that the farmers were compelled. But I do not think it is actually a matter of compulsion at all. Having perused the legal opinion supplied by the Premier when I raised this question with him by correspondence, so far as I can see the Agricultural Department has imposed a condition. The position is that the Under Secretary for Agriculture is empowered by the Federal Minister for Commerce to give his consent to sales of superphosphate exceeding 7 lbs. So if he says to a farmer, "You can have six tons" he is entitled to make a condition that the farmer shall use that six tons at the rate of 40 lbs. per acre, but whereas in my view the use of the word "compelled" implies a very definite offence

against the National Security Act—and that is how I took the answer of the Minister—it seems to me that different considerations prevail when it is only a matter of the Under Secretary for Agriculture giving or withholding his consent.

So it would be comparatively simple for the Under Secretary for Agriculture to say, "You may use this quantity I have given you in any way you deem proper in the best interests of your property." I do not think the farmers of this State can bring themselves to believe that by planting 40 lbs. to the acre—without going into the details in the terms suggested by the Premier—they are going to do as well, after making allowance for the manpower saved and the seed wheat not used and machinery not worn out, as by planting 50 or 60 per cent. of the area with a greater dressing of superphosphate per acre. In the last three or four weeks I have received a great number of communications from farmers in various parts of the State.

Mr. Patrick: And road boards.

Mr. WATTS: Yes, and from local authorities, too, in regard to this matter. One farmer in particular sent me a statement based on 30 years' experience. If I were to name him there are many in this Chamber who would realise that he is a reliable and capable man. The statement he has sent me shows that if he were to plant half the area with twice the amount of superphosphate, on reasonable calculations—and he would then be taking figures much below the average of his property—he would be £76 better off.

The Premier: The State would not get as much wheat.

Mr. WATTS: Admittedly, but he would save wear and tear and seed wheat, and taking all these things into consideration he would be £76 better off on the deal. I am sorry I have not the figures here, or I would read them, but I am satisfied that he knows what he is talking about.

The Premier: On what acreage?

Mr. WATTS: On 300 acres as against 150 acres. Two farmers came to me from the Pingrup district and said that it was ridiculous, from their point of view, to use a topdressing of 40 lbs. to the acre. In no circumstances, they said, would it be worth while to use less than 60 lbs. They wanted to know whether it would be an offence against the law if they did so. I told them that whether it was

an offence was not too clear—that is to say, a punishable offence—but that they ran a considerable risk if they disobeyed the order of the department; that in some subsequent year of this wheat stabilisation scheme they might find themselves with a reduced area when it was not reasonably justified. I said that we proposed, or rather I proposed, to use every effort to see that the matter was put on a better basis, so that they would know where they were.

Members must realise that members of the farming community are no more desirous of breaking rules and regulations, as mentioned by the member for Irwin-Moore, than is any other section of the community. But when they find out—and find out they must—that the circumstances prevailing in other States are more in accord with their own ideas on this matter; when their experience—which in many cases is very substantial indeed—indicates that it would be unprofitable to accept the advice of the department; and when there is nothing to be gained so far as the department is concerned by enforcing that advice upon them, I fail to see why that advice should be continued. Turning again to the 40 lbs. per acre dressing, I doubt also whether it would go through the drill on that basis. I do not know whether the drill can be regulated to use only that amount. I suggest it is likely the drill would put through 50 lbs. and decline to carry out the ukase of the Department of Agriculture in this regard.

Mr. Marshall: What about the National Security Act?

Mr. WATTS: As the Department of Agriculture has obtained its authority from the National Security Regulations, the hon. member is on the right line there, but I would inform him that the Federal Minister for Commerce thinks that the State Agricultural Department has the authority. On the 16th February in the Senate the Assistant Minister for Commerce was asked—

(3) Has any limit been placed upon the quantity that may be used per acre in each State for cereals, pastures and other purposes?

(4) If so, what is the maximum quantity farmers may distribute per acre in each State for such purposes?

The Assistant Minister for Commerce replied—

(3) and (4) The actual allotment of superphosphate from the State quota to the individual is a matter for determination by the Department of Agriculture in each State.

So representations, as it were, on this subject to Canberra other than on the point which I mentioned, seem to me to be substantially a waste of time, because here is the authorised department and here is the activity which is to be controlled. As a matter of fact I am pleased about that. This, in my view, is the proper place to control it. I venture to suggest that instead of a debate such as this lasting a couple of hours and including a satisfactory, or comparatively satisfactory reply from the Premier, had this matter been taken back and forth between here and Canberra we might still have been arguing the point on this particular branch of the subject until seeding time was well advanced, if not over. It pleases me immensely that the responsibility is here, and that we can get in touch immediately with the responsible Ministers and officers concerned without having to burden ourselves with applications to other parts of the Commonwealth. The Premier asked for constructive suggestions. We have made two and he has agreed to one. He is prepared to give favourable consideration to the farmers being allowed to use their own discretion.

[*Mr. Withers took the Chair.*]

The Premier: And to a conference at which all viewpoints could be expressed.

Mr. WATTS: The other suggestion is that when that is being done we must take into account the possibility of that in itself reducing the acreage, which we cannot afford to have reduced any more.

Mr. Patrick: They must have considered that in the other States.

Mr. WATTS: They did. As we are the only State with this one-third reduction imposed upon us, we are the only State which must give consideration to this matter for that very reason. If this reduction was on an Australia-wide basis for this year, perhaps I would not raise the point so strongly, but we cannot afford to let them have it both ways, and I feel that out of this debate some good may come and we shall get satisfactory results. I notice that there is some discrepancy between the Premier's idea in regard to the crop we might get from using 40 lbs. of superphosphate on land on which there is some residue of past superphosphate dressing, and that of the Minister for Agriculture. In answering a question on the 21st January last, the latter advised that the

departmental estimate was 90 per cent. of the usual production; whereas the Premier today said, I think, 75 per cent. to 80 per cent. The evidence and opinions I have received indicate that both the hon. gentlemen are wrong, but I suggest that the Premier is much nearer the mark than was the Minister.

MR. MANN (Beverley): I do not intend to speak for long. At the outset I would suggest that it is necessary that this side of the House should exist to bring matters of this sort before the Government. I felt sorry for the Premier this afternoon when he had to handle a very bad case.

The Premier: Oh no!

Mr. MANN: I have heard him submit cases in the past, and he does it very well; but he had a tough row to hoe this afternoon.

The Premier: What was wrong with my handling of the business?

Mr. MANN: There was a good deal of hedging and delay. I know when the Premier is on firm ground, and today he was not, by any means. However, the Premier did very well. This appears to me to be a civil service stunt. The first thing that happened after war broke out was the control of liquid fuel. Then we had trouble over the manpower question, and Western Australia has given more men to the military than has any other State in Australia, on a population basis. I know the figure but I am not going to disclose it to the House. It has been proved that more men have been taken from the farming areas in proportion to population than is the case in any other State. Now we are going to be sacrificed again for the Commonwealth in connection with this superphosphate question. It is time this Government stood up to its obligations, and said, "We are not going to let you deprive us of all our rights."

It has been admitted that Western Australia has been more drastically controlled with regard to liquid fuel and tyres than have the other States. More men have been taken, on a population basis, from the farming and other industries in Western Australia than from similar industries in the other States. On top of that, we have had in Western Australia compulsory restrictions upon the acreage under wheat. Now there is the superphosphate position. I do not care what the Premier may say in this House, for I have had long years of experience in farm-

ing operations and I hold that no man can successfully farm by the application of 40 lbs. of superphosphate to his land. Those who have been on the land for many years have learnt to appreciate that in this State they must fertilise to secure results. For many years, agrostologists have claimed that Western Australia's requirements were one ton of superphosphate per acre over a period of 20 years, in order to establish the full productivity of the land.

Mr. Patrick: Two cwt. to the acre would be better.

Mr. MANN: Perhaps that is so, but over a period of 10 or 20 years fertilised dressings to that extent are claimed to be essential. Obviously it is necessary over very extensive areas of the State. On the western side of the Beverley district there is a large area that was formerly miserable country, but with the use of superphosphate and clover it is now converted from country worth a shilling or two an acre into property worth £3 or £4 an acre or more. Every farmer is agreed on the essential fact that fertilising is necessary. They realise that 40 lbs. to the acre is quite inadequate, and some have told me that they intend to defy the regulation, use double the quantity of superphosphate and cut down their acreage. I say that course could be pursued, and the Government could never police the position.

The Premier: No!

Mr. MANN: I think these are the most stupid regulations that have ever been introduced. I can quite understand why the Senate knocked out the meat regulations which were the most damnable ever brought down by the New South Wales crowd, but that crowd got their deserts. The same thing should have applied to the regulation governing the superphosphate position. Certainly it should never be left to the decision of the Government through its officials. There are many men on the land today who are, to say the least of it, just as competent as are any of the officials associated with the Department of Agriculture. We can have a scientist and we can have a man with years of practical experience to guide him, and the latter is the better man. He knows just what quantity of superphosphate is needed for his land in order to ensure a successful crop. Recently we have had the argument going on between the various sections in the Press, and the Leader of the Opposition had a long letter published in an

endeavour to get some clarification of the position. It is terrible to think that at this juncture the Country Party has to bring forward a motion of this sort before Parliament. We have the Commonwealth Powers Bill to deal with, and that is an important measure. Nevertheless, we are forced to move the adjournment of the House in order to discuss this question.

The Minister for the North-West: Are there no other avenues that you could have followed up before adopting this procedure?

The Premier: Of course there are!

Mr. MANN: We have explored them.

The Minister for the North-West: I do not think you have.

Mr. MANN: In our opinion the time has arrived when this matter should be brought before the notice of Parliament, and not be taken to civil servants.

The Premier: I would not have refused to discuss this matter with you, and we would probably have secured the same result.

Mr. MANN: The Premier may not have refused to discuss the matter with us, but we have had experience in the past of the operations of regulations, particularly those imposed by the Commonwealth Government, and we are sick and tired of it. I definitely advise the House that, at the present rate of progress, in the course of a very few years there will not be 50 per cent. of the farmers now on the land who will be still on their blocks. The big factor now is the reduction of acreage and shortage of superphosphate supplies.

The Minister for Labour: Why did you not take advantage of the opportunity to discuss this matter with the Acting Minister for Lands?

Mr. MANN: We decided that there is only one place where this matter can properly be discussed.

Mr. Cross: And publicity obtained.

Mr. MANN: We hate publicity! We do not want publicity. No party in this House hates it more than does the Country Party. We decided, however, that, in the interests of the farming community and the State generally, we were justified in pursuing our present course. If the Premier is prepared to place the responsibility on the Country Party regarding the use of superphosphate by the farmers, we definitely accept that responsibility.

The Premier: I did not say that.

Mr. MANN: The Premier made some remarks along those lines; and, if he challenges us to accept the responsibility, we will definitely accept it.

The Premier: The Government has to share the responsibility.

Mr. MANN: We will accept our share because every farmer will tell the Premier or anyone else that to attempt successfully to grow wheat on the basis of 40 lbs. of superphosphate to the acre is a matter of impossibility. Owing to the labour difficulty, it is impossible to do all that is necessary in this State. What we are concerned about is that, in view of the present trend regarding superphosphate supplies and restriction upon acreage, our farmers shall not be penalised later on. As things are at present, I say that the farmers are justified in breaking the regulation and using a greater quantity of fertiliser per acre. To those who have spoken to me along those lines I have pointed out that, if they are found out, their acreage may be reduced by half next year. I am glad that this matter has been brought before the House, and I hope that some benefit will result.

MR. THORN (Toodyay): I am glad the Premier has adopted the attitude he indicated earlier and is prepared to discuss this matter with members of the Opposition, because I feel confident that some good will result. So far, the position has resolved itself more or less into one of theory versus practicability. The Government today has had placed before it the practical side of the question. I have had a lot to do with agriculture, both theoretically and practically, and I know that very often theory does not always work out satisfactorily. The farmer should know best what quantity of fertiliser is necessary for his property. He has to shoulder the burden, and he should have the say in any such decision. The Leader of the Opposition referred to the licensing question and I think that difficulty can be overcome with a proper understanding of the position. The matter appears to be one left for attention by the State Department of Agriculture.

One or two points should be made in regard to the fertiliser question. I would like a census taken of the supplies held by private individuals. If that were done, we might be able to get a more equitable distribution. There are many producers, some of them important in the industry, who are

unable to get adequate fertiliser supplies, and apart from others hold a much higher priority in connection with the shipping of the supply of dried fruits oversea. I have in mind the position of the fruitgrowers at the moment. The Premier said the Government was trying to do its best to see that every section of primary production secured its proper share of fertilisers. That is quite correct. The fruitgrower is getting a small proportion of superphosphate, which is not very suitable for fruit production for which nitrogenous manures, which are so difficult to procure today, are most essential. That mistake is being made and a census of fertiliser holdings might help to clear the matter up.

The keenness of the authorities to secure the production of sufficient quantities of vegetables for the requirements of all concerned is most laudable, but I am afraid that in consequence of that policy the vegetable growers are securing more than their fair share of the fertilisers available. I am prepared to go further and say that there is trafficking going on in connection with those supplies. One section of the community engaged in fruitgrowing is able to get supplies while others are not. Those supplies are being secured under the lap and in defiance of the law. The vast majority of the fruitgrowers are not prepared to accept such risks. I have drawn the attention of the department to this phase and I hope that some action will be taken. If the departmental inspectors were to take a census of the holdings of nitrate of soda, sulphate of ammonia and other fertilisers, the results would be enlightening. Through lack of adequate fertiliser supplies last year the currant crop, which was third on the priority list, has been considerably reduced despite the desire of the British Government to secure large shipments of our output. We were asked to produce 2,500 tons of currants but our output will be much below that quantity.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That is largely attributable to the climate.

Mr. THORN: That result was more on account of the fertiliser position. Unless we can get those supplies and the land is fed the vine, which is a strong grower, will not produce fruit. I am glad of the opportunity to mention that phase this afternoon and I hope the fruitgrowing section will receive more consideration. I have

been in touch with the vegetable section of the War Agriculture Committee, the members of which are doing a lot of excellent work, and have asked them to endeavour to organise the supply of stable manures to the vegetable growing areas with a view to releasing fertiliser to the fruitgrowers. I hope that some result will follow.

MR. McLARTY (Murray-Wellington): The Premier has indicated clearly that he is anxious to assist the producers in this matter. I am glad he is not sticking rigidly to the suggestion regarding the use of 40 lbs. of superphosphate to the acre. In my district the settlers are more interested in topdressing and pastures than in cropping, although quite a lot of cropping is being carried out as well, particularly with regard to vegetables, including potatoes, and flax. In our district we are allowed 50 lbs. of superphosphate per acre for topdressing. I would not like it laid down as a hard and fast rule that a farmer must use a certain quantity per acre for topdressing purposes. Soils vary and, in addition, some areas may have been topdressed for years and therefore do not require during the current season as heavy a dressing as other parts would call for. The practical farmer will agree that country that has been topdressed does benefit to a considerable extent in the following season.

Then again I believe the settlers have improved their pastures by cultivation and topdressing. It has been proved in the South-West that pastures that are cultivated improve both in quality and quantity. This clearly indicates that there is room for better farming. In conclusion I wish to emphasise to the Premier that an early decision is needed. We are nearly at the end of February now, and many South-Western farmers begin topdressing in March. With this restriction, they have decided upon the acreage to be sown; but I feel certain that if they are allowed to use their own discretion as to what land to topdress, they will alter their present intentions. Again I express the hope that the Premier will make an early announcement regarding the proposals which have been discussed this afternoon.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford-Midland): I thank the Premier for deciding to deal with the question on lines of not limiting the dressing for wheat growing to 40 lbs.

per acre. Undoubtedly a mistake has been made in that respect. Some seasons bring greater results from dressing than were obtained in other seasons. For instance, there are seasons in which we get self-sown crops. I remember, years ago, because of one wonderful season with self-grown crops there was an agitation for all farming to carry over feed for stock. But the disadvantage is that such seasons are so few. The season I have mentioned causes some people to imagine that there is always a residue from superphosphate dressing. My experience on my own farm was that there appeared to be a residue, but in other years there was no indication whatever of any residue. In the season that opens with early rains at the right period farmers get from the soil a greater response. The fact of a greater response being obtained in some years, has led some farmers to think that there is a residue from superphosphate dressing. I doubt it very much.

My belief is that the greater response is from seasonal rains rather than from any residue from superphosphate used. I have had the opportunity of discussing the subject of the motion with many farmers during the day, including a number from the Premier's district. From all of them I heard no complaint about the quantity of superphosphate allotted to the State. The farmers know that there is not any prospect of getting the State's superphosphate supply increased. Every farmer was invited by the Government, and this was repeated over and over again, to make application for his quota of superphosphate according to his allotted cropping area. He got his superphosphate, and the general experience is that he received 66 per cent. of last year's superphosphate. The year before last he had an allotted area. It is the same area this year. The area did not enter into the question of this year's superphosphate supply. For the same area this year one gets 66 per cent. of what one got last year.

The 40 lbs. per acre is not taken into consideration. What is considered is 66 per cent. of what the farmer obtained last year. The farmer is quite satisfied with that; but if one says to him, "Put 40 lbs. per acre to the area allotted to you for wheatgrowing," he replies, "That is hopeless. It cannot be done." Therefore the suggestion now is that the farmer, having got his superphosphate, should

use it as he thinks best in his own interests. If he is doing that, he is acting in the best interests of the State. I suggest that when the matter is being discussed, it should be recognised that there was an allotted area the year before this, and repeated this year and that this same area is fixed for next year. The fixed area is a third down as compared with the area for four years 1937-41. Therefore if we get away from the 40 lbs. per acre and allow the farmer to use the quantity of superphosphate he thinks best for his particular farm, and if he maintains the allotted area next year as for this year, irrespective of how the superphosphate is used, the matter will be on a practical basis and the Government will be doing the right thing. I thank the Premier for his acceptance of the suggestion made to him.

MR. SEWARD: Mr. Deputy Speaker—
The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. member has no right of reply on his motion.
MR. SEWARD: I rise to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

QUESTIONS (6).

FIREWOOD AND COAL.

As to Supplies.

Mr. NEEDHAM asked the Minister for Forests: 1, What is the position in regard to an adequate supply of coal and firewood for industrial and domestic purposes during the next winter? 2, Have the activities of the Government resulted in an improved outlook for the supply of these essential services? 3, If so, to what extent?

The MINISTER replied: 1, It is not likely that an adequate supply of firewood will be available. There will be a shortage, as is the case with other commodities. Steps have been taken by the Government to relieve any acute shortage of firewood by supplying wood cut by the Forests Department and by gangs of aliens under its control. 2, Yes. Firewood is supplied by the Forests Department to Government institutions and a number of hospitals, as well as some industrial concerns, and Perth and Fremantle woodyards, for domestic consumption. 3, The present rate of supply by the department is 400 tons per week. Already over 5,000 tons of wood have been accumulated in the bush, and it is proposed from now on until the end of May to increase the delivery to the Perth woodyards to about 700 tons

weekly. From the beginning of June until the middle of August (the peak period for firewood consumption) the proposal is to supply at the rate of 1,200 tons weekly. The quantity may then be reduced to 700 tons per week. At the present time supplies are limited by the railway trucks available.

BEER, STATE HOTEL PRICES.

Mr. PERKINS asked the Minister for the North-West: 1, Is it a fact that the price charged for bottled beer at the State Hotel, Bruce Rock, is 2s. 1d. per bottle, whereas the price charged by the hotels in Merredin is 1s. 10d.? 2, Seeing that the State hotels enjoy a monopoly in the Bruce Rock and Kwoylin districts, will he take steps to ensure that prices at the State hotels in these districts are brought into line with prices ruling in the neighbouring town of Merredin?

The MINISTER replied: 1, It is a fact that the price charged for bottled beer at the State Hotel, Bruce Rock, is 2s. 1d. per bottle. I am not aware of the price charged by the hotels in Merredin. 2, No. The price which is that fixed by the Price Fixing Commissioner will be adhered to.

FORESTS DEPARTMENT.

(a) As to Cutting Rights.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Forests: 1, Whether he is aware that a previously cut over area of timber country within metropolitan carting distance was recently thrown open to competition among the metropolitan sawmillers? 2, If so, was the decision to make this cutting available influenced by the resolution recently passed by the Legislative Assembly? 3, What was the minimum price per load for cutting fixed by the Department on such area? 4, What percentage increase was this price over the highest price ever received for cut over bush? 5, Would the price fixed by the Department cause an increase in the cost of timber production in the metropolitan area? 6, Is it proposed to make a corresponding increase as opportunity offers on all similar timber cutting areas thrown open? 7, What would such comparative increase be for virgin timber lands thrown open?

The MINISTER replied: 1, Yes. 2, Yes. 3, 12s. 6d. Having knowledge of the applications which have been made from time to time by the city mills for log timber, the Department expected keen competition. 4,

The previous highest price was 12s. 5, No. The maximum price of timber is fixed by the Prices Commissioner. 6, For similar cutting areas for logs for the metropolitan mills comparable prices can be expected. 7, Answered by No. 6.

(b) As to Defence Orders.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Forests: 1, Whether he is aware that grave discontent exists in the sawmilling industry because of the practice of placing Defence orders for timber supplies with three selected sawmilling concerns of the State leaving the detail distribution of such orders to the judgment of the favoured three? 2, Whether the Forestry administration of the State is in any way associated with the method of ordering? 3, Whether the State Saw Mills is one of the three concerns selected? 4, Has the Conservator of Forests (Mr. Kessell) in his official capacity in the Defence Department in Melbourne, authority and/or responsibility in the placing of orders in this State? 5, If so, will he make representations with a view to having public tenders called within the State for all timber required?

The MINISTER replied: 1, No. I am not aware of any grave discontent as I have received no complaints officially or unofficially. 2, No. 3, The State Government receives no information regarding the placing of Defence orders for timber supplies. 4, Under National Security Regulations, the Controller of Timber has been given wide powers to govern and direct the production, treatment, storage, and marketing of timber throughout the Commonwealth. 5, Answered by No. 3.

SCHOOL BUS SERVICES.

As to Insurance against Accidents.

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister representing the Minister for Education: 1, Is it a fact that the policies of insurance taken out by school bus contractors cover only cases of injury when the accident is due to negligent or dangerous driving on the part of the owner or driver of the bus concerned? 2, Do the policies not cover cases where injury is the result of accident? 3, If the answer to No. 2 is in the negative will he take action to see that all policies issued to school bus contractors are extended to cover cases of injury, the result of accident? 4, If not, why not?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST (for the Minister for Education) replied: 1, Yes. These policies only cover the contractor's legal liability for accidental physical injury sustained by any child whilst the child is being conveyed in or lawfully entering or alighting from or about to enter or alight from the bus. 2, No. Unless the contractor has incurred a legal liability as the result of neglect, dangerous driving, etc., on his part. 3, Inquiries are now being made to see whether any extension of the cover afforded children travelling in school buses can be arranged. 4, Answered by No. 3.

NATIONAL SECURITY ACT.

As to Lighting Restrictions.

Mr. J. HEGNEY (without notice) asked the Minister for Mines: Has the Minister given any consideration to the question of lifting the lighting restrictions operating here, so as to conform with lighting restrictions existing in the Eastern States?

The MINISTER replied: Every consideration is being given to the imposing of regulations, but it is very difficult to obtain an interpretation of their meaning as to lights pointing seaward. Mr. Lazzarini said that there would be no lights pointing seaward, but the Civil Defence authorities are unable to state how what is required can be effected without lights pointing seaward. This morning a telegram was received here stating that the information was being obtained. Until that is in our possession, we cannot do anything.

**NORTH FREMANTLE PROPERTIES
AND WHEAT STORAGE SELECT
COMMITTEE.**

Extension of Time.

MR. TONKIN (North-East Fremantle) [4.44]: I move—

That the time for bringing up the report of the Select Committee be extended for two weeks.

THE PREMIER: I am very hopeful that the House will not be sitting for the next two or three weeks, which would be necessary in order that adequate consideration might be given to the report. In my opinion it would not be justifiable to call the House together day after day to discuss the report. I want the House to adjourn when the Commonwealth Powers Bill has been disposed of. It is plain that the motion now under discussion would never have come before

the House but for the fact of our having these summer sittings. Indeed, but for the Commonwealth Powers Bill we would not be sitting at all now. I hope the Select Committee will get on with the taking of evidence and produce its report at the earliest possible date, so that it can be considered by the House. I do not wish the House to sit for another four or five weeks. It is doubtful whether the Chamber will be able to give this matter the consideration it deserves if the report is brought up in the dying hours of the session.

MR. WATTS (Katanning): I am aware that probably the reason why the Select Committee has not been able to produce its report today is because it was not in as favourable a position as was the Commonwealth Powers Bill Select Committee. That committee had volunteers for witnesses, but this committee is in the position of having to examine witnesses as they are available. I suspect that that is the trouble and the reason why it has not presented its report today. Like the Premier, I am extremely interested in this Select Committee. I am most anxious to know what it has to say, and I would suggest to the member for North-East Fremantle that he agree to a week's extension for the time being. He will then be in a position to know what further extension, if any, Parliament can grant him. I make that suggestion in the hope that it will be agreed to.

MR. TONKIN (North-East Fremantle—*in reply*): Have I the right to speak in reply on this motion?

The **DEPUTY SPEAKER**: Yes.

Mr. TONKIN: I desire to point out that there is no wish to delay unduly the proceedings of the Select Committee. It is, however, somewhat unfair for the Premier to draw a comparison between the despatch with which the Commonwealth Powers Bill Select Committee did its business and the way in which this committee is doing its business. As the Leader of the Opposition has stated, our trouble is with witnesses. It should have been clear to the Premier that some of the witnesses we desire to call are Commonwealth civil servants, who have to obtain permission from their respective Ministers before they can appear before the committee. That permission has not been given in all cases and consequently our work has been held up. We have reason

to believe that a most important witness will reach this State on Thursday next and will be then available for questioning.

Another important witness whom we desire to interrogate left the State before the Select Committee commenced its sittings and he only returned last week. He is not yet prepared to give evidence, his Minister not having communicated with him. Therefore, we are held up by circumstances beyond our control. The Select Committee requested an extension for a fortnight because it did not want to be in the position of asking the House for another extension. I give the House the assurance that immediately the witnesses are available they will be questioned and the report presented to the House next week, if possible. But if, by waiting for a day or two, the committee can obtain valuable evidence, I think it would be justified in waiting for that evidence. I assure the House that no delay will be occasioned through any fault of the Select Committee.

Question put and passed.

MOTION—FARMERS AND PASTORALISTS' DEBTS.

As to Mortgage Interest.

Debate resumed from the 4th February on the following motion by Mr. Stubbs:—

That this House is of the opinion that the Government should introduce legislation at once to reduce during the war to not more than three per cent. interest rates on mortgage debts owing by farmers and pastoralists, whether to government instrumentalities or other financial institutions, because—

- (a) of the severe stock losses in the pastoral areas;
- (b) the compulsory reduction in wheat acreages;
- (c) the severe rationing of supplies of superphosphate and other essentials;
- (d) the insuperable difficulties regarding manpower;
- (e) the increase in all costs of production during the war which are greater than any compensating increases in prices of some products;
- (f) it is not fair nor just that interest should be charged in full when diminishing returns and higher costs make it impossible to pay it out of earnings, thus subjecting the debtors concerned to capitalisation of arrears with resultant compound interest.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison) [5.36]: In view of the attitude that I have always adopted in this Chamber towards interest-bearing debt, mortgages and the like securities, I feel it obligatory upon me to make

some observations, especially as I cannot support the motion as it is worded at present. It would appear to me that the mover drafted the motion very hastily, or in entire ignorance of the discrepancy existing between the first and the latter parts of the motion. I would also say that there is a general belief in this Chamber, for some reason or other, that financial institutions attached to the State Treasury are actually, in effect, banks. In reality, they cannot by any stretch of imagination be said to be banks at all.

Why a Government tacked on to the institution known as the Agricultural Bank the word "bank" is difficult to understand. It does not function as a bank. It has not the powers of a bank. It is purely a branch of the State Treasury that uses certain moneys raised by the State in the first place and handed over to this particular institution for distribution. At the same time, it has been given power to collect interest on that money and, if possible, to collect the principal, or capital, at a certain date. That is that institution's sole function. It has not the powers or the authority possessed by private institutions known as banks, which create credit by inserting figures in a ledger and which take upon themselves the right of custodianship of people's deposits for safe-keeping. The Agricultural Bank does not lend money which it creates itself. There is a great discrepancy between the two institutions. It might be said to be criminal folly indulged in by the Legislature of Western Australia, but we find that the taxpayer borrows money and hands it over to this institution, which, as I say, collects interest on it and in due time also collects the principal. It, therefore, accepts all the risks of the initial establishment of the primary producer. It lends on what are practically State assets.

It lends on land, which is all the farmer has got in many instances when he first borrows money from the institution known as the Agricultural Bank. He probably then has not a single penny in actual cash or any assets of his own. This institution hands out to him the taxpayers' money. This implies that the State taxpayer accepts all the risk incidental to the development of that farmer's property. Yet, when the farmer reaches the stage when he is able to clear his liability to the Agricultural Bank and could be an asset to that bank by trading further with

it, he is told—and now there is no risk whatever—"Now that you have complete possession of the asset which the taxpayer has built up for you, you must leave us and go to a private institution." That was criminal folly indulged in by the Legislature of Western Australia. Immediately the proposition became a success, the farmer was handed over to a private bank to swell its profits, and later that private bank exploited the farmer to the full.

There is another aspect of this motion. If it is carried as worded, I point out there is a small percentage of the total volume of money involved in these securities that belongs to private individuals. From statistics to which I have given some consideration, I find that the volume of private money represents approximately 1 per cent. of the total. That is the proportion owned by private individuals, people who have had the good fortune or who have been discreet enough to accumulate a small amount of wealth, which they invested in these securities. This small proportion, however, represents a very substantial sum of money, because the total amount is £400,000,000 or £500,000,000, a colossal sum. One per cent., members will realise, represents a large sum of money, and that is what has been lent by private individuals. Many of these people now find themselves in an invidious position. The earnings of the securities are not sufficient to guarantee them their maintenance for the rest of their lives. The purchasing power of their interest is gradually declining, owing to the rapid inflation in the price of commodities. Therefore, many find their standard of living has been materially reduced, while at the same time they are denied the privilege of securing the old-age or invalid pension, because of the fact that they have this income and principal.

Some of these people are just in that position where they cannot exist on the investment and live a full and happy life. Yet they are denied any right to apply successfully for the old-age pension. I point out that I am doubtful whether, in most of these cases, the primary producer himself could find the wherewithal to pay off the mortgage. If we followed out the intentions of this motion, therefore, we would force this individual, who looks on this small investment to provide a livelihood, into the invidious position of having somehow to exist upon it and who is, at the same time, denied the right

enjoyed by people who have not been so heedful of their own welfare in the way of being thrifty and self-reliant. They can get the pension, but it would be denied to the mortgagee about whom I have just been speaking. Then again there are contracts in existence between these individuals, institutions and the primary producer. While I would have no hesitation in breaking the contract between the primary producer and the financial institutions, commonly referred to as banks, I would hesitate to do so when it affects the private individual and the Agricultural Bank, which has no power such as the banks have to create credit. But above all it must be remembered that the taxpayers are now carrying a terrific burden involving a huge sum of interest because of the writings-down by the Agricultural Bank on these properties.

Mr. Boyle: The abandoned farms!

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes, and I suppose there are writings-down on farms still possessed. The banks that created the money to lend to the Government to give to the Agricultural Bank to lend to the farmer, do not reduce the interest rate to the Government. So when the Government writes down and reduces the interest burden to the farmer, the taxpayer has to carry the balance. We are doing it, too, under the arrangements made for a period of three years with the pastoralists. It is as well that we should be thoroughly conversant with what we are doing when we are dealing with motions of this sort. There are three distinct institutions, namely, the Agricultural Bank—which is not a bank at all, but a branch of the Treasury, and the I.A.B. which is in a like category—the individual, and lastly the private banks. They are all embodied in this resolution. While I have always been particularly hostile to an institution privately owned having the right to manufacture money and lend it out to Governments and individuals as though it belonged to the institution that manufactured it—I speak of credit issues—I cannot support this motion because of the other two types of mortgagee appearing in it.

I do not think the taxpayer should be called upon to carry any further burden. When I say that, I have every sympathy with the primary producer, whether he be producing wool, mutton, wheat or other primary product. The primary producer has been referred to and rightly so, as the salt of the

earth. Without him there could be no existence for the remainder of the community. He is a national acquisition. I do not wish members to believe from what I have just said that the farmer has no obligations to the rest of the community. We often hear the foolish argument as to the city versus the country raised on questions such as this. But there could be no farmers without the co-operation of the rest of the community. We could not maintain one wheatgrower, one fruitgrower, or one woolgrower if it was not for the conscious and unconscious co-operation of the remainder of the community. If a farmer had first of all to manufacture all his requisites both for the carrying on of his industry and his personal comfort, and also educate his own children, and transport his own product oversea, he would not grow a grain of wheat. We would be well advised to remember that.

Each section of the community that co-operates to supply the complex demands of society is equally important, but the farmer does without many amenities that other sections of the people enjoy, although he does have a little more freedom in some ways than does his brother in the city. Taking it by and large the primary producers have had a very bad deal. I do not absolve their Parliamentary representatives from blame in that regard. They complained bitterly about the progress of the industrialist, but the industrialist is not led in the same way as the primary producer, in Parliament. When we have a principle we fight for it. The industrialist, too, will displace his Parliamentary representative if he refuses to give effect to his wishes. I do not find the primary producers taking up the same attitude.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Mr. Hughes: They very nearly did recently.

Mr. MARSHALL: Nor do I find those who represent the primary producer in this Parliament advising him to do it.

The Minister for Mines: Why commit suicide?

Mr. MARSHALL: I can remember when a Government that had entire control over the amount of money that could be enjoyed by this community was kept in power in Canberra by the Country Party representatives. They kept it there for years. While these Federal representatives professed to have any amount of sympathy for the pri-

mary producer they were supporting a Government that was undermining the possibilities of their ever getting any redress. I have no hesitation in saying that Dr. Earle Page was one of them. He did more than any other man in the Federal Houses to injure the chances of the primary producers getting any financial redress. The State representatives of those areas which are chiefly devoted to primary production should awake to the fact that through him and Mr. Stanley M. Bruce, Australia's public enemy No. 1, the Commonwealth Bank has been so hamstrung that it cannot give effect to the wishes embodied in this motion. He and Dr. Earle Page so altered the control and put in charge men interested in private institutions who have nothing in common with the struggling farmer, and have so administered the policy, that it is impossible for redress to be given to the primary producers. This is due to the fact that the farmers' party in the Federal arena kept an anti-social Government in office for many years. The representatives of the primary producers ought to review what has been happening and inform their people of the facts.

The idea that the taxpayers can constantly shoulder these responsibilities is one which the Opposition repeatedly infers as possible. One would think that the State Government controlled finance within the Commonwealth. Yet every member knows we have no control over finance and never did have. Dr. Earle Page and Mr. Stanley M. Bruce, by introducing the Financial Agreement and inserting it in the Constitution, committed one of the gravest possible crimes against this country. I admit that the people by referendum endorsed it.

Mr. Hughes: Did not we all support them on that?

Mr. MARSHALL: Many people supported them, not realising what would happen. We are no better off today for what has happened; we know the effects of the Financial Agreement. There we had the Leader of the Federal Country Party professing sympathy with the primary producers and at the same time doing something to make it utterly impossible for them to get redress, then or in the future, or at any rate until the people wake up and themselves take action.

I could not accuse the member for West Perth of making an utterance in this

Chamber for the purpose of practising deception upon his listeners. His honesty of purpose is impregnable. I could not accuse him of making a statement with the deliberate intention of deceiving in order to bolster up his argument or succeed in his desires. Therefore I can only say—

Mr. Hughes: That it must be a case of mental weakness?

Mr. MARSHALL: The member for West Perth is very unsophisticated when it comes to dealing with the results achieved by banking institutions in the Commonwealth.

Mr. SPEAKER: I hope the hon. member is going to connect the member for West Perth with the motion.

Mr. MARSHALL: I am replying to statements made by him. The hon. member said that he could not support the motion, and added that these institutions which had made advances to the farmers had received in return on investors' funds a dividend of only $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. Doubtless the hon. member believed it. He was quoting from the statistical bulletin of the Commonwealth Bank. Had the hon. member read the footnote, he would have found that the figures were compiled from the published accounts of banking companies. Surely he knows that when those companies publish their accounts, they employ methods that hide materially the profits they make.

Mr. McDonald: Then the Commonwealth Bank must be as unsophisticated as I am.

Mr. MARSHALL: I suppose the hon. member could say that. These companies average approximately 5.5 to 5.8 per cent., that is, the nine joint stock banks operating in Australia.

Mr. Hughes: You will see also that they have reserves equal to their capital.

Mr. MARSHALL: I will come to that presently.

Mr. Hughes: You are awake to that?

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes, but the member for West Perth was not. The bulletin quoted by the hon. member based its figures on the published accounts of those companies. To show how far astray he was, let me quote the report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the monetary and banking systems of Australia. In paragraph 637 it stated—

It is customary for a bank to set aside, before disclosing its profits, certain amounts which are used to create or increase reserves, variously described as "inner reserves," "secret reserves," "reserves for contingencies"

or "contingencies." The nature and amount of these reserves are not disclosed in the published accounts. Inner reserves are usually created by charging against profits a provision for the depreciation of premises or investments, or for bad and doubtful debts, in excess of the amount actually required for that purpose. The result is that the asset in question appears in the balance sheet at less than its true value.

Those amounts are not published in this bulletin. That is only a preliminary step. On page 245, in paragraph 644, the Royal Commission had this to say—

For many years it was the practice of some of the banks to write down their premises consistently and heavily, and in some cases this was done to excess. In 1921, the balance-sheet valuation of the premises in England, Australia and New Zealand of one of the banks had been reduced to less than £8,000. It is difficult to justify this course. Other banks have not written down the value of their premises to the same extent.

The member for West Perth, before quoting that document in defence of the lenders to primary producers—the main lenders being the banks—if he had followed up the history of the Royal Commission that inquired into banking, would have known that Mr. Davidson, who was general manager of the Bank of New South Wales, was asked by the Commission to disclose the actual value of the inner reserves, the secret reserves, of his institution, and replied—

Before I can do that, I must get permission from England.

He was not even allowed to tell the Royal Commission the actual value of money that had been taken out of profits and placed under this heading, involving many millions of pounds. The amount was kept secret, kept away from the knowledge of the Australian public. Not to this day is it known! However, there is an estimate that the actual value of the premises owned by banks is about £10,000,000. Really, that is only about one-third of their actual value. I shall give one illustration of how these people get money out of the primary producers and then hide it from the primary producers and the rest of the community. The Bank of New South Wales has a universal charter. The sky is its limit! The bank cannot flaunt a Royal Charter like its Imperial colleague, but it has an unlimited charter, enabling it to go anywhere and everywhere and embark in all sorts of investments. Although it is world-wide in character, yet in these published accounts which it issues it has the impudence to assess the

value of its assets in buildings and so forth at £3,600,000. A Sydney valuer, who valued the hundred branches and the principal premises of the bank in Sydney, declared that £3,600,000 would not cover the value of those assets alone. And the bank has premises practically all over the world! Such institutions suck the lifeblood out of the primary producer, and then we have the unsophisticated member for West Perth telling us that they get a poor 3½ per cent. interest!

Mr. McDonald: They are now getting about 2½ per cent.

Mr. MARSHALL: I will tell the hon. member what they get 3½ per cent. interest on now. He is anxious to have the information, and so I will give it to him. I quote in regard to the same bank again, and what this bank does most banks do. They all practise the same principles. This particular bank started with a capital of £20,000, and then it began to show profits, and in February of 1817 it commenced to issue shares of £20 each. The original shares were £50 each, but in 1817 the bank changed its policy and issued, out of profits, shares at £20 each. Moreover, £20 per share was put away in reserves, to meet the eventuality of liquidation. I do not know whether the member for West Perth can see that bank going into liquidation! So that we have the spectacle of this bank starting off with a capital of £20,000, and now find that that sum has increased to £8,500,000—odd by inflation! A pure process of inflation! I tell the member for West Perth what the bank is paying 3½ per cent. on. On invested funds! On watered stock! The dividends are paid on the present capital of £8,500,000, which represents pure inflation, money taken out of profits.

Mr. McDonald: There is no inflation, and no watering.

Mr. MARSHALL: The fact remains that the primary producer has been bled to the extent of the difference between £20,000 original capital and the present capitalisation. That is how the bank hides its profits. Let us review all these banks. Since 1900 they have made profits to the extent of £136,000,000—in 42 years! Has not the primary producer contributed towards that sum? Let me give the member for West Perth another illustration of how the primary producer is bled by the banks. In 1850 the capital of the bank with which

I am dealing was £2,850,000, and there were no reserves. In 1932, the last year for which I can obtain figures, the capital was £45,928,487. Of course, these banks have the Commonwealth Bank always available to draw on—the Commonwealth Bank, which represents the whole wealth of the Australian nation. Nearly all the banks today operating in Australia figured in the bank smash of 1890. Therefore the $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. mentioned by the member for West Perth is paid on inflated capital. Really, the figure is 5.8 per cent. I take strong exception to the hon. member's excusing the banks for what they have done. If the motion included only that particular class of institution, I would readily support it. But the primary producer has paid time and again to those institutions all that it cost them to make the loans.

Mr. McDonald: What profits has the Commonwealth Bank made?

Mr. MARSHALL: Whatever profits it made belong to the people. They do not go into private pockets. They are available for correct use by the people. The poor old primary producer can go on, hoping against hope!

Mr. Hughes: Have you an overdraft?

Mr. MARSHALL: I have no assets and never had any, and therefore I have not had an overdraft from any banking institution. I am never likely to get an overdraft.

The Minister for Mines: You do not want one.

Mr. MARSHALL: No. A bank is not an institution which borrows money or accepts depositors' money and lends it out; it is a manufacturer of money. It makes the money it lends. It creates it.

Mr. McDonald: Why did not all the banks fail in the 1890's?

Mr. MARSHALL: I would not mind, but Mr. Speaker would not allow me to go delving into the records to ascertain the reason.

Mr. McDonald: It would be interesting to know.

Mr. MARSHALL: A farmer goes to a bank and gets an overdraft. The hon. member knows as well as I can tell him that every penny of money so advanced is created credit.

Mr. McDonald: I totally disagree with you.

Mr. MARSHALL: Not one farmer ever took out the amount of his overdraft in

legal tender; he took the bank's cheque and operated against his account.

Mr. McDonald: He took out somebody else's money on loan.

Mr. MARSHALL: He did nothing of the kind, except in very few instances. I tell the member for West Perth that 99 per cent. of the commercial transactions in the Commonwealth are by cheque, and so he can realise the insignificant amount of legal tender used. Here lies our trouble, as well as the primary producers'! Let me give the hon. member another illustration of how these institutions cheat the public, especially when the public is not watchful of them. When banks buy their own properties, they get possession merely by parting with a cheque. They honour their own cheque. No one ever heard of a bank paying for an asset in legal tender; even if it did, the legal tender would not belong to the bank; it would probably have been placed with the bank for safe-keeping. But the bank does not pay by legal tender, it pays by cheque. Observe the cunning way in which it is done! Without parting with any money at all, the bank gets possession of an asset worth £20,000. In the same way the bank gets possession of the property of the primary producer. When purchasing its own property, the bank makes a debit entry in its ledger for £20,000.

Mr. McDonald: What about you and me starting a bank?

Mr. MARSHALL: There is a lot of merri-ment made about this matter, but these are positive facts. The time is rapidly coming when the burden now being carried by the primary producers will become so heavy that the rank and file will have to bear a share. That will be the day of reckoning. The smile will go from the faces of some of us then. This cannot go on very much longer; the day of reckoning will come and then the smiles will vanish. Reginald McKenna has told us that every advance made by a bank creates a deposit. That is true. How is it done? When a farmer secures an overdraft of £1,000 from a bank, he is merely credited with that amount in the ledger. He then makes payments to his merchants and labourers, and then the money finds its way back to the bank again as a further deposit. That is the cunning way in which banks hide the real fact from the people and argue that they only lend out money deposited with them and get interest on it. On one

side of the ledger there is an asset for them, an overdraft of £1,000. When the cheque comes back, it is a liability; so they say, "There are our liabilities and our assets."

One would think that all the banks would get would be the interest on the money they advance, when actually they created the advance by figures in the ledger. No-one else is allowed to do that. A counterfeiter makes money and is punished, but the banks are sufficiently clever to avoid detection. Like the counterfeiter, the banks create money and it is they who today are grinding the producer under their heel. Their one great objective is power. They own all the assets of the farmer and the pastoralist, they own our homes, they own the Press, the wireless and the cinema. They control our lives and they also control the Parliaments of the Commonwealth. They control every single policy enunciated. There is no escape from them and there will not be until some particularly courageous Australian calls a halt and puts them back in the position to which they rightly belong. They will then be operating as ordinary businessmen, such as butchers and bakers. They should not have the right to control the nation's credit or hamper it in any way. It is a criminal shame that we should have motions such as this brought before us, because of the power and influence of these individuals, to whom the whole world, including Australia, is indebted for having used what does not belong to them. Foolishly, we pay interest to them and promise to return the capital at some given date. Until we stop that sort of thing, it is little use our carrying motions like this. Banks control the price level. As long as banks have the right to control the nation's credit, it is vain for Parliament to carry motions such as this, as they will not materially affect the farmer, who has never been treated fairly, not even by his own parties, Federal and State. There is another party now in the Federal arena which is introducing the Mortgage Bank Bill.

Mr. Hughes: Which party is that?

Mr. MARSHALL: The Labour Party. I do not know whether members have read that Bill. If they have and hope for redress for the farmer, they had better console themselves immediately—there will be no redress for the farmer. What I fear about the proposal is not that the primary producers will be relieved of their debts, but that the right-

ful ownership of the Commonwealth Bank will go from the people, because it is proposed that the Mortgage Bank will sell inscribed stock and debentures in order to raise money. Here we will have a branch of the Commonwealth Bank brought into existence, ostensibly to relieve the farmer and other primary producers of their debts. The very best it can say to these producers is, "We will try to borrow money at a low rate of interest so that we can lend it to you." That is what is offered to the farmer today by this proposed Bill. As the proposed Mortgage Bank will be a department of the Commonwealth Bank, as the member for West Perth would say ipso facto it should be a bank of issue. As the Commonwealth Bank is the central reserve bank of Australia, it should have complete control of currency issues and also of credit issues. It should have no occasion to borrow money from anybody nor to secure credits from anybody, because it has the whole of the resources of the nation behind it.

It should use its power under our own Constitution not to do what it is going to do for the primary producers under this Bill—a mere gesture of grappling with the proposition. There is a debt of £500,000,000 and the extent of capital of this bank is to be £4,000,000. It is to be fed with a trickle of moneys from the Commonwealth Bank and if it can manage it and get away with it, it is going to sell the interests of the bank to private institutions. The Commonwealth Bank or its ordinary trading department will make £1,000,000 a year available to redeem the farmers' debt of £500,000,000. It could not be done for the next 150 years, not at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. to 5 per cent. interest which will be charged. Amortisation fees will be added to the extent of one per cent. In the end the farmer will be paying about 5 per cent. Why in the name of God does not the Government do the right thing? Why not say, "In the course of 20 years every farmer in the Commonwealth will be out of debt. We will use the powers given us under the Constitution. Through the medium of the Commonwealth Bank we will take over 5 per cent. per annum in peace or war of the farmer's debts and free him from liability at cost." That would be doing something genuine for the primary producers. Then the Government should build up the financial structure in such a way as to forbid a recurrence of the tragic hap-

penings now taking place. There is no hope in any other way. I would love to have had a shot at the banks but in the circumstances I cannot support the motion. I cannot ask the taxpayers to carry any further burden, or ask those individuals who may be very old and depending on these investments for a livelihood, being denied other avenues of support, to do so. I cannot support the motion as it is at present worded.

On motion by Mr. Boyle, debate adjourned.

BILL—BUSINESS NAMES.

Council's Amendments.

Schedule of two amendments made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Justice in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 14, Subclause (2)—Insert the words "or any cancellation under Subsection (3) of this section" after the word "cancellation" in line 30, page 9.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: This is a small amendment which will give additional protection to firms being cancelled. I have discussed the matter with the Registrar, who thinks the amendment should be accepted. It provides that if the Registrar cancels the registration of a firm and finds it justifiable to annul the cancellation later he may do so, thereby saving firms the necessity of going direct to the court. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 2. Clause 14, Subclause (4)—Insert "or (3)" after "Subsection (2)" in line 13, page 10.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

Resolutions reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

House adjourned at 5.31 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 25th February, 1943.

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

QUESTIONS (4).

APPLE AND PEAR ACQUISITION BOARD.

As to Price, etc.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Is he aware that the almost complete absence on the local market of early eating apples such as Red Astrachan, Beauty of Bath, Lord Wolesley, Lady Cannington, and others, is because present conditions and payments make marketing of them a non-paying proposition, and this in spite of the fact that when supplies do reach the market the Apple and Pear Acquisition Board receives from 10s. to 15s. per case, the price to the grower being but 5s. 7¾d., which includes fruit, case, packing, transport, and agents' selling charges? 2, Further, in view of the heavy loss entailed to the Commonwealth Government by acquisition, undue cost to purchasers (when apples are available), and poor returns to the growers, will he take up the matter of the operations of the Apple and Pear Acquisition Board with the Federal Minister for Commerce, and urge that the acquisition scheme be abandoned subject to the payment of a subsidy of, say, 2s. per case to the growers, to enable them to make their own marketing arrangements, thus insuring for themselves a measure of equity and a living return?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST (for the Minister for Agriculture) replied: 1, According to market records there has been no diminution of the quantity of early varieties of apples marketed. Actually they have increased: 1942—712 cases were marketed and 1943—833 cases marketed. The price to the growers on the basis indicated is not 5s. 7¾d. but 7s. 1d. 2, The majority of fruitgrowers in this State favour retention of the Acquisition Scheme.