

Mr. YATES: I have covered a fair bit of ground tonight and if I have trodden on anyone's corns I am sorry.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Do not mind the corns. That is what you are here for.

Mr. YATES: I appreciate the courtesy extended to me by all members since I have been here. I have made many friends among both Labour members and members of the Government, and I am certain that my future in this House will be a happy one. I will give of my best and co-operate with all members for the welfare of this great State of ours.

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

House adjourned at 10.34 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 20th August, 1947.

	PAGE
Question: Railways, as to Diesel for Kalgoorlie—Esperance line	255
Leave of absence	255
Address-in-reply, sixth day	255

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

QUESTION.

RAILWAYS.

As to Diesel for Kalgoorlie—Esperance Line.

Hon. R. J. BOYLEN asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) Has consideration been given by the Minister for Railways to the necessity of providing a Diesel rail coach for the Kalgoorlie-Norseman-Esperance line?

(2) If so, is there any likelihood of having one in operation by the next Christmas holiday season?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) It is impossible to make any such promise at the present time, but every effort will be made to meet the desires of the Goldfields' residents in the matter.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch, leave of absence for twelve consecutive sittings granted to Hon. J. G. Hislop (Metropolitan) on the ground of public business.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Sixth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. L. LOTON (South-East) [4.35]: I wish to congratulate you, Sir, upon your appointment as Deputy President and trust that you will have an easy time in the Chair during the unavoidable absence of the President. It is to be hoped that before the expiration of the leave granted to Mr. Seddon he will be restored to good health, and we look forward to having him back in the Chair. I also congratulate Mr. Parker upon his appointment as Minister for Mines and Health, and Mr. Wood upon his elevation to the position of Honorary Minister in charge of the Agricultural Department. Members representing the rural areas are gratified at having a practical Minister dealing with agricultural matters because we realise that when we bring our problems before him he can visualise the difficulties from the correct angle without having to rely upon his official advisers for directions as to the course he should pursue.

This afternoon my remarks will be confined mostly to matters coming under the jurisdiction of the Honorary Minister at the Agricultural Department. The first question I wish to bring under his notice deals with the deficiencies with regard to C.S.A. sheep trucks. These are special trucks provided by the Railway Department for the conveyance of lambs to the market. They are fitted with a type of grating so as to prevent the lambs from becoming soiled in transit. Some reference was made recently in the Press to the matter, and for some unknown reason the railway authorities are not now supplying the trucks. Only a fortnight ago one of the reports dealing with stock sales at Midland Junction, commenced with the following words:—

Many lambs were submitted in a soiled condition with consequent loss to the producers.

I trust the Honorary Minister will take this matter up with the Commissioner of Railways and with the Minister for Rail-

ways in an attempt to arrive at some temporary arrangement to be fitted in the trucks that are available. I am satisfied that by placing lengths of 3 x 2 jarrah on their edges with a grating of 2 x 1 timber on top, most of the difficulty could be overcome, and skilled labour would not be required to carry out that work. About a fortnight ago a deputation from the Northam and York Racing Club was informed by an official of the Railway Department that many horse boxes had been altered to convey horses to country race meetings. I think—and I feel that most producers would agree with me—that trucks for the conveyance of livestock to the metropolitan markets and to the Fremantle Freezing Works should certainly receive preference over racehorses.

The next point I shall raise concerns a serious disease that the sheep people are confronted with in the pasture growing areas, particularly those where sub-clover is prevalent. I refer to the disease known as Distokia. Dr. Bennetts and Dr. Underwood have been working on the matter for some time, but after following up many clues we seem to have reached a dead end. I understand that samples of fodder, etc. have been sent to England because facilities are not available in this State, or in the Commonwealth, to proceed beyond a certain point with the necessary research work.

We sheepmen are of the opinion that a research farm should be established in the clover belt. By the clover belt I mean the area between Williams and Denmark and between the Great Southern line and the South-West. Kojonup would be an ideal site, and that was decided upon at a conference held by 12 country road boards at this time last year. There were present at the conference the Under Secretary for Agriculture and Dr. Underwood. All were agreed that Kojonup would meet the requirements for an experimental farm. The matter does not seem to have been finalised. I believe some small experiments have been made at Wandering and at the experimental research station at Salmon Gums: but the sheepmen feel that experiments should be carried out in their own district. It may not be the sub-clover that is causing the disease. That has to be proved. I would ask the Honorary Minister whether it is possible to reach some finality on the ques-

tion of establishing the experimental farm at Kojonup and, if not, where it will be situated.

The Honorary Minister: It will be at Kojonup.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I thank the Honorary Minister. That is one point I have gained and it is pleasing to me to hear him make that remark. I now wish to refer to the lack of inspectors of stock at country markets. Before the war the Agricultural Department had several inspectors continually moving about the country centres inspecting stock. During the war years I know it was not possible to employ these inspectors; but hostilities have now ceased for over two years and the inspectors have not been replaced.

I assure the Minister that the increase of tick and lice on sheep has reached alarming proportions, particularly so at present when the price of sheep happens to be high. Dealers are buying sheep which are being transported from one end of the State to the other. They are in a filthy—that is the only word that can be used—condition and are contaminating clean flocks, with consequent loss to the competent sheep farmer. No matter what care he bestows on his sheep, if he has a bad neighbour whose sheep are dirty, the pests will soon make their presence felt in the clean flocks.

Transport is of vital importance to country people. I was very interested in Mr. Craig's speech yesterday and his views on the transport problem. I realise the railways are a necessity, but I am not in favour of the establishment of a board simply to act as a protector of the railways. Nor am I in favour of unrestricted road transport. Gravel roads cannot carry the big loads imposed on them by some trucks, and consequently a limit must be placed on the carrying capacity of such trucks. During the recent superphosphate shortage some trucks, with their trailers, were hauling up to 15 tons per trip over those roads, and therefore it is not to be wondered at that now many road boards are seeking Government assistance to repair the damaged surfaces.

I have travelled over the road between York and Perth during the last four or five weeks. It has been cut up, particularly in the low-lying areas. The disrepair can only be attributed to the transport of superphosphate and wheat during the last two

winters, particularly in the early winter, when the road surface becomes spongy and the heavily loaded trucks travel at a very low rate of speed. On the billy portions they are almost stationary, travelling only one and a half miles per hour. This causes the bituminised surface to crack; and once it cracks it is not long before the remainder of the surface breaks up and must be repaired.

If the State is to progress we must make greater use of motor transport. Perishable products can be carried successfully by such transport. Mr. Craig yesterday referred to the transport of butter from Majimup to Bunbury, where it could be trucked to Perth and then again transported. I do not consider all that handling is necessary. If a truck can go to the factory and pick up the butter and deliver it to the shop in Perth, why should we not allow that to be done? The same remark applies to the carriage of other commodities from the country areas. The producer has the right to transport his stock to the metropolitan market; but in many cases an efficient transport service could be operated in a district and the necessity for farmers to own big trucks would be obviated. No-one is in doubt as to the manner in which stock can be transported by road or about the saving of time that would be effected as compared with delivery by rail.

During the past 12 months road transport has been called upon in this State to do a national service. When the power shortage occurred last year and Perth was faced with a meat famine, road transport was availed of and Perth residents suffered no inconvenience. When the coal shortage was overcome, however, road transport was banned. At the start of seeding this season the Railway Department was unable to transport the superphosphate, so road transport was availed of again. It did a wonderful job. A farmer could order his superphosphate in Perth on Tuesday, and if his farm were within 150 miles of Perth, it would be delivered on Wednesday at his farm, not at the railway siding. Had the superphosphate been carried by train, it would not have reached the siding in that time. Therefore, road transport must fill a vital place in the development of this State.

I now have something to mention to the Minister for Health about medical equip-

ment for country centres and to make a comparison with the provision of that equipment by the Government for the metropolitan area. A number of members have spoken on the question of water supplies and have urged that water should be provided in Kalgoorlie and country towns at the same price as is charged for it in the metropolitan area. Water is one of the necessities of civilisation. I fail to see why country towns should not get medical equipment on the same terms as it is supplied to the metropolitan area.

I understand that the Government has taken over premises, opposite the old Royal Perth Hospital, for the establishment of an x-ray plant, to be provided by the State, for the convenience of the population. The section of the population that will be able to avail itself of these facilities will be mainly that in the metropolitan area. I fail to see how it can be otherwise. I have recently been to the Minister about a plant for a country centre where the people are prepared to subscribe a liberal amount. I am a little disappointed at the attitude taken by him on this occasion. Perhaps he can make some explanation on the floor of the House that will satisfy all of us. The other point I wish to deal with concerns the Electoral Act. Mr. Heenan said he hoped that some reform would take place in the matter of the election of members to this House, or the facilities for their election.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: I pointed out that it was part of the Government's policy speech.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: That is all right in the eyes of Mr. Heenan.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: What about the Government?

Hon. A. L. LOTON: The Government will have to make its own explanation. I am not the Government.

Hon. G. Fraser: You are one of its supporters.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: The hon. member and his friends claim that this is a non-party House.

Hon. G. Fraser: No, we do not. Do not make that mistake!

Hon. E. M. Heenan: You do not want the Government to go back on its policy speech?

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I would hate the Government to go back on its promises. This might be something for which the Government has an explanation, and it is, perhaps, not going back on its promises.

Hon. G. Bennetts: It may have said this only to hoodwink the people.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: The members of this Government would not be the only ones to have hoodwinked the people.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: It would be nothing new.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: No. If ever a candidate was crucified it was the defeated candidate at the recent election for Pilbara.

Hon. G. Fraser: He got a lot of assistance under the lap.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I fail to see why in a disputed election—and it was only a disputed election—new names should be allowed to be added to the roll. Part of our Constitution states, "One man one vote." At the recent election for Pilbara it was possible—I would not like to say that it was done—for a man to have voted previously in Subiaco, West Perth, or Nedlands, and immediately after the election to have transferred to Pilbara and had his name placed on the roll there. As a disputed election it should have been fought on the rolls as they were at the 15th March. It was not a by-election, and I say that the defeated candidate was crucified. I have nothing against the man who was successful. I hope some reform is brought about to prevent a recurrence of such a happening at some future time. These disputes will arise again, and I hold that in the case of a disputed return, the rolls, as they were at the time of the disputed election, should be the ones for the subsequent poll. I have much pleasure in supporting the motion.

HON. C. H. SIMPSON (Central) [4.55]: I desire, first, to associate myself with the other speakers in extending to you, Sir, congratulations on being elected to the Chair as Deputy President. With that I couple the hope, which I know is also shared by you, that our President, who is now convalescing after a serious illness, will soon again take his place in the House. I would like also to congratulate Mr. Parker on his elevation to the position of Leader of the House, and Mr. Wood for occupying a

sent on the ministerial bench. Both of these gentlemen will, we know, extend to us every courtesy. They are competent, and we can assure them that we, in turn, will extend to them our co-operation in the despatch of the business of the House.

I wish to extend congratulations to our new members. Each of them, in his own way, brings something new and of value to the Chamber. It is offering no disparagement to the other new members to say that we have a most valuable addition in the new representative for the East Province, Mr. Latham. His career very closely parallels that of Sir Hal Colebatch. Both have seen long parliamentary service in our State Parliament; both have had ministerial rank; both have sat in the Federal Senate and each has, in varying ways, rendered service to our State in other channels of public life. We expect quite a lot from Mr. Latham and I am sure we shall not be disappointed.

Speaking of my own electorate, I am happy to say that we have had a very good season and that the pastures, crops and stock are in excellent condition. The outlook is good and prices are satisfactory. I think I can almost say that the farmers and the pastoralists are happy! The tomato gardeners at Geraldton are having quite a good season, and they have recently established an expansion of their trade by supplying the Singapore market. They are hopeful that that trade may be still further expanded. The tomato industry means an annual revenue to Geraldton of about £250,000. There are 253 tomato growers, and of that number 129 are Australian and 124 are aliens. Recently a packing unit was established, and it is run on a co-operative basis by Westralian Farmers Ltd. It is capable of packing 1,000 cases a day. Reports from the Agricultural Department in Melbourne pay a high tribute to the quality and handling of that pack. One point on which the tomato growers are gravely concerned is that of the provision of an adequate water supply. I am pleased to note that the Government intends taking steps to overcome that shortage.

There are two other developments that are of great importance. The first is with regard to the Eradu coal deposits, and the second the opening of lead mines. At Eradu, which is some 25 miles from Geraldton,

there is a coal seam that covers an extensive area and has been proved, by borings, to vary from 21 feet to 29 feet in thickness. So far a great deal of trouble has been experienced on account of water, but two shafts have now been sunk and pumps installed that are handling up to 1,500,000 gallons of water daily. They are now down to the seam and the people of Geraldton are awaiting, with great interest, the proposed tests of the actual coal. They hope it will be suitable for burning in locomotives, or that some steps can be taken to have it burned in specially designed furnaces, or, perhaps that a briquetting plant may be installed, so that this can form a valuable addition to the solution of a major power problem.

With regard to ports and hospitals, it is pleasing to note the Government's expressed determination to develop a policy of decentralisation and to pay particular attention to country housing needs. It is also pleasing to know that the Minister has promised us to make a start with the regional hospital in Geraldton as soon as the supply of materials permits. The old Geraldton hospital is about 60 years old and is in a sad state of disrepair. A new hospital there would serve a vast area. One other thing needed is some provision for amenities for district hospitals. In local centres, residents have bestirred themselves and helped quite a lot. More, however, is needed to give adequate accommodation and comfort to the nursing staff.

A problem which is fairly general in the district is that of soil salinity, and in some centres it is becoming acute. Certain areas are worse than others. The parts most affected are around Morowa and Three Springs and in some places around Northampton and Kojarena, while complaints have also been made that there are signs of the trouble at Yandanooka. I have here extracts from an interesting letter from Mr. Victor Rogers, of Koolanooka, who has been experimenting and studying the problem for years. This reads as follows:—

I understand that at the present moment there are about 1,000,000 acres of salt in the West alone. The matter must eventually be dealt with by both State and Federal authorities as the problem is too big for individual farmers. During the past two or three years I have experimented by doing some deep ploughing, ridging and scarifying with 2-inch points. The growth of oats on salt land was so good that I thought I had solved the problem. This

year has proved my theories to be almost entirely wrong. Apparently the excellent growth obtained was almost entirely due to the seasonal rains and the consequent washing out of the salt from the top layer of soil. The only discovery that I have made is that I can grow a better crop of oats on salt land without (or with very little) super. than with the usual application of, say, 80-90 lbs. per acre. I would hesitate to make this a general recommendation because soil types vary so much.

A neighbour of mine has subsoiled over 100 acres but it is too early to say what the result will be. In this district the water table is high, and the more bounteous the rains the more the trouble is aggravated because the water comes near the surface and capillary attraction renders the topsoil useless. My own opinion is that so far as low lying ground is concerned, no good can be done except by drainage and that is a costly business. Where high country is going salt through seepage from outlying salt formations it would seem that the only solution is to pump the water away by means of channels, bores and windmills. There are only about three men in the Commonwealth who have very much knowledge on the subject, but it should not be hard, and it is unquestionably very necessary, to have men trained specially to deal with this scourge.

The Honorary Minister: Does it mention who the three men are?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: No, but I can find out and tell the Honorary Minister. I think Dr. Teakle is one. In parts of my province, there is a growing interest in the country between the Midland railway and the Indian Ocean. This area stretches from Yanchep to Dongara and is about 200 miles long by about 50 miles wide. Admittedly, much of the country is not first-class land but it has a regular, reliable and adequate rainfall. We know from experience that similar unpromising country in the South-West has been brought into production and the soil values have been built up. Much of the land would be suitable for the laying down of sub-clovers or lupins, and could be developed into good pastoral land.

In view of the possibilities of that part of the State, I do not think it would be asking too much of the Government to have a soil survey made of the region and to establish two or three experimental farms there to ascertain the potentialities of the land. I should say one danger that would have to be guarded against would be soil erosion. Much of that country is sandy and it may be necessary to introduce controls to deal with that by means of special legislation.

Turning now to goldmining, I am pleased to say that the Big Bell mine and the Triton mine at Reedy are now in full production. On the other hand, I regret to say that the days of the Wiluna mine are numbered. That mine has made a great contribution to the wealth of the State. It is sad to see Wiluna sharing the fate of other Goldfields towns where the payable gold reserves have become exhausted. Against that are definite possibilities at Meekatharra, while at Day Dawn the Mountain View mine has been taken over by a company on option and it may well develop into something big. Since 1942, the mine has produced £340,000 worth of gold from a little over 8,000 tons of ore. Some of the values have been exceedingly rich. It is situated close to the old Fingal Mine, which in its heyday was the sixth best goldmine in the world. It employed over 500 men and supported a town of over 4,000 people. I strongly endorse the remarks made by Mr. Heenan and Mr. Hall in regard to prospectors. That fine body of men deserve every encouragement the country can give. They are individualists, and we must not forget that it is often the small prospector who discovers the big mines.

There is one item in which people in my province are interested, namely, the forthcoming centenary celebration on Friday next of the birth of Lord Forrest. We feel we have a special interest in that distinguished citizen of Western Australia. It was through Geraldton that he started his overland expedition in 1874, making his first crossing of Western Australia and travelling through to the overland telegraph line in South Australia. During that journey he traversed the entire length of the Central Province, and today there are many landmarks still discernable to indicate the course of that journey. I am pleased we have a representative of Western Australia's greatest son in this Chamber in the person of Mr. Mervyn Forrest, his nephew. I regret that he is unable to be present today on account of sickness.

Sir John Forrest's record is one of inspiration to every man in the State. We owe him a great deal. His achievements were many, but I think it necessary to refer to only one, namely, the Goldfields Water Scheme, which cost about £3,000,000. If we take into account the fact that Western

Australia then had a population of only about 150,000, one-third of what it is today, and that money values were very different from what they are now, that would represent an undertaking today costing about £25,000,000. Only a man of vision and imagination could have essayed such a task and only a man of unflinching purpose and unswerving courage could have carried it through successfully. Perhaps Lord Forrest's greatest claim to fame in the future will be his spirit of adventure and his work as a pathfinder in our outback, which stands, I think, as an inspiration and a challenge to the youth of today.

One thing which I have been asked many times to inquire into is the question of war-time restrictions and controls particularly with regard to proposed transfers of land and properties generally. It is claimed that there has not only been delay in dealing with applications but people cannot understand in some cases how and why these controls work. I can quote a concrete example. Mr. Terry Hicks of Geraldton, one of my constituents, was executor in the estate of his father, which estate included nine blocks of land at Mosman Park. These blocks were valued by the road board at £21 to £27 per block. When probate was granted, the stamp assessor valued each block at £25. Two of them were sold at that figure and the Sub-Treasury approved of the sale.

When Mr. Hicks received an offer of £25 per block for the other seven, the Sub-Treasury said they could only approve sales at £5 a block. It was pointed out to the officials that they had already approved of sales at £25 for similar blocks in the same estate, but they said the first figure was wrong and that the values had to be based on the 1942 figures. Other outside valuers, competent men, agreed that the correct price was in the neighbourhood of £25 a block. Eventually a way out was found, in that the Workers' Homes Board purchased the blocks at £25 each. That sale went through because it was not subject to Sub-Treasury control.

I put it to members that either the officials of the Workers' Homes Board were bad businessmen or that a flagrant injustice had been perpetrated by Sub-Treasury officials. I do not blame these officials, because they are working under a system. That system, however, bristles with

anomalies and iniquities, and yet we are asked by the Commonwealth Parliament, by means of a referendum to be taken shortly, to perpetuate a system which can inflict such injustices. I agree with Winston Churchill when he said—

The only path to safety is to liberate the genius of the nation . . . Instead of attacking capital we will attack monopoly. Instead of imposing restrictions and controls we will attack all kinds of restrictive practices. It is only by the path of Freedom that Britain can win salvation.

I think the same thing can be said of ourselves. Another item mentioned is in connection with the postage rates on food parcels to England. People take the view that these parcels are gifts, and it would be a nice gesture on the part of the postal Department if either they could be sent free or at reduced rates. I am aware that this is a matter concerning Commonwealth administration and I am also aware that it has previously been ventilated. People hold the view that the question is of such importance that we might well ask the Premier to contact other Premiers and again represent the whole thing to the Federal authorities for their consideration.

The present position is that about 120,000 parcels are being sent from Australia to the Old Country every week. Of that number about 5,000 are sent from Western Australia. There are three postage scales—for parcels of 3 lbs., 1s. 11d.; 7 lbs., 3s. 7d., and 11 lbs., 5s. 10d. Ninety per cent. of the parcels forwarded bear the heaviest rate. The actual postage that is received is split in three ways—roughly one-third goes to the Commonwealth, one-third to the British Government and the remaining portion covers the cost of sea transport. The fact remains, however, that these are gift parcels, and as the parcels cost approximately £1 each, the equivalent of one-third of the value is absorbed in postal charges.

As these are gift parcels, I submit that we might well represent to the Commonwealth Government the advisability of subsidising these parcels to the extent of, say, two-thirds of the postage rates, which would be regarded as a magnificent gesture by the people of Britain and would be a stimulus to further effort on the part of our folk. The cost of such a scheme would be approximately £1,000,000 a year, but

that would be gladly borne by the people of Australia. Let me quote another extract which seems to sum up the attitude of both British and Australian people towards the question of parcels generally. The article appeared in "The London Daily Graphic" over the name of Victor Lewis, a reporter with the English cricket team which visited us last year. He wrote—

From Perth to Adelaide, through Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales up into Queensland and down into Tasmania, there is a magnificent desire by the ordinary people of the Commonwealth to help in a practical way some family in that land which they refuse to call anything but "Home," though they may never have seen it. Complete strangers would wander on to a cricket ground and say to Edrich, Hutton or Compton, "I will send a parcel home for every run that you score." And they did. On the day of the last Test in Sydney, a man promised to send a parcel for every run. He kept his promise. He raised the money among his friends and Home went 833 parcels. This is not a Government-organised effort. This is humanity on the highest level—the spontaneous wish of one man to help his brother. You need to live and walk and play among these people to see the extent of their personal efforts and the depth of their sympathy.

That about sums up the position. In advocating the encouragement and stimulation of individual giving, I am not losing sight of the magnificent work done by the Red Cross and similar institutions which may ensure more equitable distribution. In a recent appeal, when the Red Cross sought to raise £30,000, the total amount received was £80,000. Nor do I think that people generally will forget this, but there is no denying the fact that, by the forwarding of these parcels, a goodwill bond is forged between the people of Australia and the people of England which will be of great value in the years to come. I consider that Britain's need is our opportunity. If she falls, we fall: and it is only through her survival that we ourselves can hope to survive.

I come now to migration. This is such a big subject that I hardly know where to begin. At a civic reception tendered to the Deputy Premier at Geraldton on the 15th July, the Mayor, Dr. J. McAleer, registered an eloquent plea for an active and aggressive policy of immigration as a solution of the population difficulty and the need for defence. In Geraldton there is evidence that the events of the early days of 1942, when

invasion by the Japanese was threatened, are still remembered. All the women and children were evacuated and from day to day lived in dread of imminent attack. There was a trial alarm, and during the black-out an attempt to evacuate the civilian population was largely a fiasco. The people of Geraldton remember that.

At that time there was an aerodrome close handy to the town, which afforded the people some comfort because they thought it might be of some value in defending them. That aerodrome is now being dismantled and the garrison has been either transferred or disbanded. I think the people of Geraldton are quite right in asking what the Commonwealth Government intends to do about it and what the State Government intends to do by way of making representations to the Federal authorities pointing out the need for the defence of that port. They take the view—and I think rightly so—that Geraldton constitutes an ideal strategic point for attack, with its port facilities and two lines of railway and two arterial roads connecting it with the capital city. They look beyond our northern borders at the huge Asiatic population which is awakening to national consciousness, and from Geraldton northwards our State is very vulnerable to attack.

If members think back a few years, they will recall that when the then Prime Minister (Mr. Curtin) returned from England, he made an announcement that it would be our policy to build up the population of Australia to 30 millions in 30 years. Dr. Evatt said the same thing to a London interviewer. The present Minister for Migration, Mr. Calwell, repeated that statement. This would have meant a migration absorption rate of 13 per cent. per annum. Later it was announced that Australia's absorption rate was only 1 per cent. per annum, or 70,000 migrants a year, and this, added to the 1 per cent. natural increase, would represent a population increase rate of 2 per cent. per annum. Why that has been whittled down was not explained, except on the score of Australia's incapacity to absorb more migrants.

Let me quote one or two statements of a general nature bearing on the question of population and migration. Last week the Lieut.-Governor, Sir James Mitchell, voiced his personal opinion that each Australian

State was capable of supporting the whole of Australia's present population. Mr. Calwell last week invited a million Americans to come to Australia. I wholeheartedly agree with that invitation, and hope it will be accepted. I should like to see the number doubled or even tripled. At the same time, it is difficult to reconcile Mr. Calwell's statement with the present Government's quota of a total of 70,000 migrants annually. Even if migration were restricted to Americans, which would be unthinkable, it would take more than 14 years to admit a million at that rate. I admire Mr. Calwell; I think he is a sincere and able man. Two further statements made by him are well worth repeating. He observed—

If Australia has learned one lesson from the Pacific war, it is surely that we cannot continue to hold our island continent for ourselves and our descendants unless we greatly increase our numbers. A third world war is not impossible. It would be prudent, therefore, for us not to ignore the possibility of a further and formidable challenge within the next quarter of a century to our right to hold 3,000,000 square miles of the earth's surface.

I give a further extract from "The Daily News" of the 6th August, quoting two relevant passages—

Mr. Calwell, in addressing The Overseas Empire Correspondents' Association, said that the best use was not being made of the manpower and material resources of the Empire, and he urged that a conference should be held soon between Prime Ministers and Ministers of Migration. He also said that the over-population of Britain and the under-population of the distant Dominions exposed the whole Commonwealth to attack. Britain would be strengthened and not weakened by distributing her excess population within the Empire.

Those statements speak for themselves, but I do not think there is any need to try to establish a case for building up our population. That need is self-evident. In perusing the pages of "Hansard" over past years, I have found that this topic has been the feature of the debates time and time again, but these expressions of opinion, without the concomitant of necessary action, are mere wishful thinking. What I wish to emphasise is that our present rate of population is too slow to meet an urgent and pressing need. Later I shall suggest a 10-point plan which, if adopted, I think might get us somewhere. I admit that for the present, consideration of this question might have to be subordinated to the need for housing our own people and the duty of

ensuring that our ex-Servicemen are properly settled. There is also the acute shortage of shipping, but this is not to say that we cannot plan ahead. It is what we should be doing.

There are three ways of increasing population, firstly, by the net increase of births over deaths; secondly, by migration and thirdly, by a successful foreign invasion. The third we do not care to contemplate, and the question is whether we shall try to stimulate either or both of the first two. Dealing first of all with the birth rate, let me again quote Mr. Calwell. In the House of Representatives, he said—

The sad truth is that Australia as we know it is only 150 years old, but we are slowly bleeding to death. If the net rate of reproduction does not improve, we will be finished as a nation at the end of another 50 years.

Dr. Gentilli, of the Western Australian University, in an admirable article, proved conclusively that on present population trends and without immigration aids, our Australian population would reach its maximum of 8,000,000 in 1980 and would thereafter decline. But there are other aspects culled from Mr. Calwell's statement of the 22nd May. He gave statistics showing that the average number of children per family was 4.05 in 1901-5 and 2.18 in 1941-45, not much more than one-half. The percentage of childless marriages in 1911-15, was 13.3 and in 1936-40 it was 22.3. In the age groups, the percentage of children under 15 in 1901 was 35.1 and in 1946, 24.4 and by 1975 it was assumed that it would be 22 per cent. On the other hand, in the group 65 years and over, the comparable figures were four per cent. in 1901 and 12 per cent. anticipated in 1975. In other words, 56 per cent. of the population would, in 1975, have to keep the percentage of children under 15, which it would be expected to do, but would also have to support 12 per cent. of the population, being persons over the age of 65, a figure three times greater than that of 1901 and likely to increase. As to how the birth rate can be kept up, I do not know.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: Give the workers the 40 hour week.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Marry the young people earlier.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: That is a matter for experts and apparently we are hearing from some of the experts now. Some people

hold the view that women are more selfish. Again I say I do not know. If the decrease in the mortality rate in infancy is any criterion—a rate which has been marked during the past few years—I would say that the maternal instinct is as strong now as ever it was. Before passing from this phase, I think greater stress should be laid upon the joys of family life and that a campaign should be undertaken to bring the country's needs before the people as a whole with a view to stimulating women to take a more serious view of the question.

Before passing from that altogether, I would like to give figures bearing on what I would call the social aspect in relation to the size of families. A survey made of several European cities when times were normal showed that there was a gradual decline in fertility as mothers ascended the social scale. Over a wide area, the figures were: Very poor mothers, 151 births per thousand; very rich mothers, 54 per thousand, or about one-third. The ages of the mothers were between 15 and 50. So it would appear that economic causes have a direct bearing on the birthrate only in reverse order.

I am a believer in a higher standard of living, always provided we can afford it and do not aim too high. But I am inclined to agree with the remarks of Mr. Grayden, as reported in "The West Australian," that a standard of housing that requires half the life-time of a man to acquire may be too high. A high standard of house goes hand in hand with a high standard of furniture. People have to keep up with the Jones's and when it comes to a choice between, say, a lounge suite and new carpets or a refrigerator on the one hand and a baby on the other, I think the birth rate suffers. I am a believer in economic security and social security, but both those things are useless without physical security.

Returning to the migration issue, it has been stated that the Australian absorption rate is one per cent. per annum. According to experts this is far too low. Without wearying members with detailed quotations, let me refer them to two articles published in "The West Australian," one by Mr. O. D. A. Oberg on the 31st August of last year and the other by Mr. H. F. Goerke on the 17th January of this year. Mr. Goerke's analyses were especially interesting. They showed that in

the absorption of incoming migrants, 62 per cent.—or nearly two-thirds—would be permanently employed as a direct result of the increase in population. This, he pointed out, would probably be an under-estimate. Allowing for two per cent. unemployment, that would only leave 36 per cent. for which basic jobs would have to be provided, and of these eight per cent. would be employed in dealing with the actual work of migration itself.

This is important as it considerably simplifies the problem of finding employment for new arrivals. Reduced to simpler terms, it means that when people come here they have to be housed, clothed and fed and somebody has to do the job. Obviously a substantial proportion of the newcomers will be employed in this way. I said that the rate of intake of one per cent. was too slow. In a "Forum of the Air" session in 1945, Mr. Calwell admitted that over a 30-year period Argentina had increased the rate by over five per cent. per annum and Brazil's intake was over four per cent. Those were what might be called peaceful penetrations. There was no desperate over-riding need to build up population in the face of a growing menace.

The population increase of the United States from 1850 to 1900 averaged over three per cent. annually and this was her period of greatest growth and established her unrivalled prosperity. But for that, she could not have turned the scale in World War I. or have saved Australia in World War II. Coming nearer home, let us consider what our own State has done since 1880. We have multiplied our population 16 times. In the first three ten-year periods from 1880 onwards our annual increase rates were 7 per cent., 27 per cent. and 5 per cent. respectively, and over the last 30 years we have witnessed a population increase of 3 per cent., which is 50 per cent. better than the rate mentioned by Mr. Calwell.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: You are not a relative of Mr. Calwell, are you?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: No. I am quoting him as the Minister for Migration. It is my belief that Western Australia could build up a population of ten times the present figure without any difficulty. Even that would give us only five persons to the square mile. Some might say that a lot of our country is desert. So it is. But Arabia is nearly all desert and it has a population of

seven to the square mile. Mexico has a great deal of desert and yet with two-thirds of our area she carries a population of 21,000,000; and Mexico is no sub-standard country. Her standard of culture is rising rapidly. Before the war Japan, with only 15 per cent. of arable land, had a population of 400 to the square mile.

It has been authoritatively stated that America had an over-all increase of 2 per cent. during the migration intake period, but that figure is deceptive. Let me give an illustration: Our population is 500,000. Suppose we had an intake of 10 per cent. annually for 10 years. That would be 50,000 per year and in 10 years we would have 1,000,000. But the point is that at the end of ten years with a population of 1,000,000, the 50,000 would not be 10 per cent. but only five per cent. When it is said that America had an over-all increase of two per cent. it follows that during the earlier stages her intake must have been much greater. As a matter of fact, in the 20 years from 1850 to 1870, America's intake rate was nearer four per cent. These figures were extracted from the "Encyclopaedia Britannica."

There is no need for me to labour the point but, generally speaking, the population capacity of a country is the number of persons that it can comfortably feed. Australia exports half her total produce and I do not think there is anybody who would question that she could produce very much more. The proportion of Western Australian foodstuffs exported totals 80 per cent. and that again could be stepped up. I do not need to tell members what advantages would accrue from having more people here. It would solve the problem of our railways and make them pay. It might even help to solve the native problem. Farmers particularly would feel the benefits of a larger consuming population, which would make price stabilisation very much easier.

I have mentioned defence. It might be asked what fears we need entertain of foreign aggression. Well, there is the Asiatic mainland; the Indonesians awaking to national consciousness; and Japan. I know that Japan has been defeated and is down and out; but we know, too, that it is only six years ago since she was a world power and a major force in the world. We remember that with the advent of Hitler, Germany became, within six years, a power that threatened the world. Nations are

like individuals. They have very short memories for misery and defeat but long memories for their hours of glory and aggrandisement.

In my opinion, Japan is only awaiting the day when she can have a free hand, and she may achieve politically what she might be hampered in doing economically, and again threaten the peace of Australia. The last time she failed. Next time she might succeed. About five weeks ago there was a pan-Asian conference held at New Delhi. I think it was attended by 28 Asiatic nations plus Egypt. One of the two major items discussed at the conference was the question of free migration and the three countries particularly mentioned were East Africa, Australia and the Pacific islands. Migration to those places was what those nations were considering and I think it is something we ourselves should consider.

It may be asked: What is the solution? First of all, we must fill our continent and my suggestion, which is not unlike Mr. Calwell's, is to use political and strategic considerations to achieve what perhaps economic efforts alone cannot do. I suggest that we should sell to England and America the idea that they, as well as we, have a stake in the Pacific. We can represent Australia as the apex of their strategic triangle. They have the men, the plant and the money and they would solve the problem that we are finding it very difficult to solve. Since the war ended, 80,000 migrants have gone to Canada from England, and during the same period only 1,500 have come to Australia. That is something worth thinking about.

I said earlier that talk without constructive suggestions was wishful thinking. Believing as I do that Western Australia is the most under-populated State in the Commonwealth, and the most vulnerable State, and that our future development and defence are bound up with the question of migration, let me offer for consideration a ten-point plan which would, if adopted, achieve something of real value. Here it is:—

1. The appointment of an assistant Minister to deal directly with migration, and in particular to press Western Australia's claims for development and defence.

2. An intensive publicity campaign to condition the minds of the people to this grave and growing need, by means of lectures, Press articles, films and instruction in schools.

3. An official, nation-wide drive to encourage larger families, stressing the supreme value of the family unit, and the value of the native-born Australian as the best possible immigrant, with a scale of marriage and family allowances based on the Russian model as published in V. H. Wallace's book, "Women and Children First."

4. An educational programme designed to teach young and old the cultural and scientific achievements of nations other than our own, and stressing the need for a spirit of welcome and co-operation.

5. A programme of suitable instruction to all incoming migrants designed to adapt them to Australian conditions and appreciation of the Australian way of life.

6. The provision of suitable reception houses to house migrants for a course of training as set out in point 5, this course including a course in simple English using Basic English as a groundwork, the length of the course varying according to the need for such instruction.

7. The inculcation of a national Australian spirit after the American model but linked with the ideal of a British Commonwealth.

8. The encouragement of the idea of absorption by infiltration and the discouragement of the development of national groups.

9. The planning and initiation of a programme of works and country development calculated to employ and absorb migrants; country centres to be asked to assist in the general plan of decentralisation, having in mind the special need for development of the North-West as an urgent item in the defence programme.

10. The closest possible liaison with the Federal authority and the encouragement of foreign capital investment, both national and individual, and the importation of industrial plant and technical skill to speed up the process of employment and absorption.

That, as I see it, is the course that we should adopt. We are, as it were, at the cross-roads of destiny. Either we go forward or we drift towards disaster, and possible extinction. That is the choice. There is no other. So let us give a lead to our people to grasp the opportunity that offers. Never let it be said that we abandoned our opportunities through craven fears of being great. I support the motion.

HON. R. J. BOYLEN (South) [5.46]: I desire first, Mr. Deputy President, to thank previous speakers who have congratulated me on my election to this House. I wish also to congratulate you, Sir, on your elevation to the office that you hold during the absence, owing to illness, of our President. As a new member the thing that impressed me most, despite statements and

inferences to the contrary, was the favourable circumstances under which this Government came into office.

The difficulties under which the previous Administration laboured were intensified by its having to co-operate to such an extent with the Commonwealth Government in making most, if not all, of its resources available in furtherance of the Commonwealth Government's all-in effort to accomplish the successful conclusion of the war. In an effort to achieve this end the legislation usually enacted had, of necessity, to be set aside or postponed. Such essential departments as those controlling the maintenance of railways, shipping, roads and—most important of all—housing, had to be neglected temporarily owing to the drastic shortage of manpower, transport and material.

A large percentage of the timber milled and asbestos manufactured in this State was required in the erection of camps, etc. to accommodate the Fighting Forces. Formerly this State held huge reserves of building materials but today in the district which I represent it is impossible to buy 100 ft. of flooring, despite the fact that there has been a change of Government. I do not intend to criticise the Government for this as it has not been in office very long; but it must expect some criticism and accept some responsibility in view of its election promises in connection with housing, which was made a vital issue.

I am entirely convinced that the Wise Government was unduly criticised in this regard, as the figures for the months of January, February and March of this year are in favourable comparison with those of the ensuing three months of the McLarty Administration. It must be remembered that most of the materials used in the building trade, with the exception of bricks, timber and asbestos sheeting, have to be imported from the Eastern States. Again the annexation of manpower, supply of raw materials and transport must be taken into consideration. The present Government has enlarged the scope of the Housing Commission. It is useless setting up boards or enlarging commissions unless there is a greater amount of raw materials available. The only way of achieving that is to make more attractive the conditions of the timber workers. Any industry

offering good conditions invariably has an abundant supply of manpower available. The same can be said of other commodities required for house building. Supporters of the present Government in this House were responsible for defeating a Bill which made provision for giving better housing conditions to the timber workers of this State. Boards and commissions get us nowhere; the things we want now are flooring boards and weatherboards.

If Press reports are correct, I am pleased to see that the Government intends to establish a sulphide treatment plant at Kalgoorlie; but one plant will not be nearly sufficient to cope with the sulphide ore that exists in the huge area that I represent. I think the Labour Party can claim the credit for establishing so many State batteries throughout the mining districts. I see no reason why other plants cannot be established at Coolgardie, Southern Cross, and at Norseman, where so many small mine owners and prospectors have been operating successfully for many years. No effort should be spared to treat every ounce of gold available, as it means so much to the economy of the State.

I believe it is inevitable that the price of gold will be increased, and I think the Government should increase the prospector's allowance. When this allowance was first made it was fixed in accordance with the basic wage existing at that time, and the State's prosperity was not then comparable with what it is today. I emphasise the fact that every ounce of gold adds to the State's economy. If the Commonwealth Government intends that the price of gold should be increased, it should be done on a sliding scale.

The Government has appointed a Royal Commission to investigate the Workers' Compensation Act and its operations, but I notice that no member of a trade union is on that Commission. I hope that the Government will amend the existing Act, to provide conditions much more favourable to the workers of this State. Labour Governments have on a number of occasions amended this Act by adding further advantages or by increasing some of the benefits, and on other occasions have made the attempt but have failed to get the legislation through this House. I hope that as a result of the investigations of the Royal Com-

mission, the present Government will amend the Act, which at present provides for a worker to be paid half wages in the event of his being off work through accident, up to a maximum of £4 10s. per week irrespective of his responsibilities. Most workers, of course, receive much less than the maximum. These rates must be increased.

Under the Commonwealth Act any worker doing manual work, irrespective of wages, is eligible to receive compensation. The Government in 1944 amended this Act to provide for payments in respect of disabilities under the Second Schedule, so that the worker would be paid, irrespective of the wages received. The provision of Section 2 of the Workers' Compensation Act, which is a vicious section, should not be limited to 12 months. An incapacitation such as silicosis, which is a progressive disease, discovered after a man has left the mining industry, is in all probability caused by the employment, and should be recognised as such, but no claim can be made if the recent employee has T.B., nor can he re-enter the industry. The maximum compensation in Western Australia is £750, which should be received, particularly in the case of a fatal accident.

Compensation under the New South Wales Act was limited to £1,000 and that amount has been raised. That Act provides a weekly payment for life, fixed by a Commission. It was increased from £3 to £3 10s. for the worker, from £1 to £1 5s. for the wife and from 8s. 6d. to 10s. for each child up to school-leaving age, with a maximum of £6 per week. I trust that workers and their dependants in this State will shortly be as well, if not better off, in the event of meeting with sickness, accident or death during the course of their employment.

The roads in my district are in a shocking state, and I hope the Government has a good road programme in hand. With the increase of motor traffic this is a most vital factor. The main road east of Carrabin to Coolgardie is now under construction, for which the Wise Government can claim the credit, as it was assembling the necessary plant and materials when it went out of office. I trust that this road will be extended south through Norseman to Esperance, so that the people of the Goldfields will have a good road to their natural seaside resort. This road could then be extended to Hope-

toun, Ravensthorpe, and eventually to Albany.

The road from Esperance to Hopetoun is one of the worst in Western Australia today. At Hopetoun there is a promising fishing industry. The men who went there to establish it are making a success of an industry hitherto unknown in that part of the State. Ravensthorpe promises a reasonable yield in the mining of both gold and copper. In addition to serving the tourist traffic, such a road would serve the prosperous mining town of Norseman and equally prosperous agricultural districts. I would suggest that the Government give consideration to the establishment of a national park reserve at Esperance. If one-thousandth of the money spent in the metropolitan area were to be spent at Esperance, it would be one of the beauty spots of the State.

When that tolerant and broad-minded statesman, the late Lord Forrest, proclaimed King's Park as a national reserve, I think it is safe to say that the whole population of this State was not much greater than that of the Goldfields today. Had it not been for the vision and foresight of that wonderful statesman, we would not have been able to show tourists this national reserve, of which we are so proud. I do not think I am asking for too much in requesting that an area be surveyed and proclaimed in the vicinity of Esperance Bay, so that future generations may take in it a pride equal to that which we today take in King's Park. It should be done now, before the land gets into the hands of private monopolists, because if that is allowed to happen the State, to provide such a reserve, will have to buy it back again.

I believe it has recently been suggested that the timetable for the Esperance railway be altered. That would cause considerable inconvenience and hardship to workers on the Eastern Goldfields and to business people at Esperance. The train now leaves Kalgoorlie at 7 p.m. on Saturday, arriving at Esperance at 8 a.m. on Sunday morning. This enables Goldfields workers to begin their holidays without loss of time. The train leaves on the return journey on the Friday evening, bringing the workers back to Kalgoorlie and the surrounding districts at 8 a.m. on the Saturday, thus giving housewives an opportunity to obtain provisions

for the week-end, and enabling the bread-winners to go to work on the Monday morning. The suggested alteration might mean that the workers would lose an extra day's pay, and the people of the Goldfields view the suggestion with alarm. I trust that the Minister will not allow any alteration to the existing timetable.

There are many farming properties in the south-western area of my electorate. Roads, of course, are one of the main concerns. I refer particularly to the reconstruction of the main roads, which in most instances are in bad condition during the winter months. Most of the farmers lack many of the implements necessary to carry on the efficient working of their land. In most cases they have tractors, harvesters and so on, and when a major breakdown occurs they may be held up for months, either waiting for spare parts to arrive or sending them to Perth to be repaired. If the Government could ensure that engineering shops and garages in those areas had first priority with regard to tools of trade, lathes, etc., they would be able to operate efficiently. This would obviate loss and inconvenience to the farmers and would keep them going at all times, particularly during seeding and harvesting. Many have left the land not only because they could not buy new machinery, but because they have not been able to maintain their plant.

Recently, in one town, I was told of three young men who had established themselves on the land and had shown promise of being efficient farmers, but who had to seek other occupations for the reasons that I have stated. In mining areas a number of essential commodities have been scarce at different times. One very serious shortage is that of bicycle tyres and tubes. I hope the Minister dealing with supplies will view this matter urgently, as many miners and prospectors rely entirely on this form of transport to enable them to reach their work and earn a livelihood. Another serious shortage on the Goldfields is that of infant foods, which I understand have been short elsewhere. At the same time we had the spectacle of racehorses being transported inter-state by air and other transport, while mothers had to do with makeshift foods for their infants, in a great many cases with worrying results.

The absence of water has precluded the enjoyment of amenities on the Goldfields because the people cannot afford to pay the high charges. It is because of that position that we do not see the attractive lawns at the front and back of houses on the fields that are so noticeable in the metropolitan area. If lawns and gardens were cultivated at Kalgoorlie on the basis we see in the city it would cost the people on the Goldfields at least £30 a year. At that price water could only be regarded as a luxury and that applies to other amenities that the use of water would make possible. Of course, water is procurable in abundance on the fields as it is in other parts of the State but, as I have indicated, it is available only at prohibitive prices. If the Government could see its way clear to lower the charges, much more water would be used at Kalgoorlie at no extra expense to the Government. On the contrary, it would provide a source of added revenue.

I would like to draw the attention of the Government to the campaign in progress in connection with the colony housing scheme at Wooroloo. An appeal has been launched on the Goldfields where workers have been asked to contribute and employers to subsidise on a £ for £ basis, a fund to assist the movement. I know of at least one union that has agreed to impose a levy on its members at the rate of 1½d. in the £ and their employers—they are two of the local governing bodies—are to subsidise the scheme on a £ for £ basis. I have nothing but praise for the worthy effort undertaken by Dr. Henzell and have no intention of offering any criticism of the enthusiasm he is displaying in that effort. At the same time, I regard it as rather degrading that a man of his capacity should be devoting his talents and ability to organising this scheme. I think his time could be far more profitably employed if it were devoted to the medical side of his work.

I understand that the Commonwealth Government has made available a considerable amount of money to the States for the purpose of dealing with tuberculosis. I do not know how much of that grant has been allocated to Western Australia but it should be possible by agreement between the Commonwealth and State Governments, to provide the money necessary for the establish-

ment of the colony without asking people to impose fresh taxation upon themselves, particularly as in many instances the people concerned can ill-afford to undertake the added obligation. This matter is of particular importance to the people on the Goldfields as tuberculosis is a secondary disease that in many instances develops consequent upon the industrial diseases, such as silicosis, which are so common among workers in the goldmines. If this problem were tackled seriously, it would mean much saving in the present great waste of human life. I feel sure that members will agree that it is more important to save the lives of Australians than to hunt the Continent for immigrants. I have much pleasure in supporting the motion.

On motion by Hon. J. A. Dimmitt, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.1 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 20th August, 1947.

	PAGE
Questions: Shipping, interstate, as to tonnage of imports	269
Motor license fees, as to granting reduction	269
Chief Justice, retirement, as to tabling files	270
Housing, as to prefabricated homes, timber requirements, etc.	270
Koolan Island iron-ore, as to exemption to leaseholders	270
Water supplies, as to Goldfields reticulation finances	270
Railways, as to refreshment-room finances	271
Education, as to candidates for scholarship examination	271
Electricity supplies, as to completing Rokestone extension, etc.	271
Address-in-reply, seventh day	271

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

QUESTIONS.

SHIPPING, INTERSTATE.

As to Tonnage of Imports.

Mr. GRAHAM (on notice) asked the Chief Secretary:

What was the total tonnage of imports which arrived at Fremantle from the Eastern States during—

(a) the last three months of the Wise Government's term of office;

(b) the first three months of the McLarty Government's term of office?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(a) 89,095 tons (January, February and March, 1947).

(b) 76,177 tons (April, May and June, 1947).

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Well!

MOTOR LICENSE FEES.

As to Granting Reduction.

Mr. GRAHAM (on notice) asked the Attorney General:

(1) For what reasons were the license fees for motor vehicles increased as from the 1st July last?

(2) In view of the present restrictions on the supply of petrol to consumers and the proposed further reduction as recently announced, will action be taken to grant immediate relief to motorists by way of reduced motor vehicle licenses, together with rebates to those who have already paid excess amounts?

(3) If not, why not?

The ACTING PREMIER (for the Attorney General) replied:

(1) (a) Local Government Group Associations urged the repeal of the 25 per cent. reduction on license fees on petrol-driven vehicles. The Traffic Branch of the Police Department also favoured restoration.

(b) As at the 1st July a great proportion of motorists were receiving very substantial use from their vehicles not only for business but also for pleasure. Observations on roads at week-ends and holidays and ordinary traffic at other times indicated how substantial was the approach to normal use.

(c) The concession was originally granted at a time when petrol was at a premium and most private vehicles almost stationary, and business vehicles heavily restricted unless they used gas producers. Consequently gas producer vehicles received no reduction.

(d) There are scarcely any gas producers in use now and it is obvious, therefore, that the removal of the restrictions had been so considerable as to render their use unnecessary.