

railway fence and it is used by the electors to cross over the railway and get to the platform, as well as to the other side of the town. Anybody who happens to be there will see ladies wheeling perambulators over the rails; they will see the ladies goose-stepping and lifting their perambulators up and down every one of eight rails, but they get across, and nothing is said. I feel that that is proof of the commonsense of the average Australian because the bridge is altogether out of the question nowadays. I hope they will go on as they are doing now until later on when we shall build the splendid subways for which blue prints have been prepared. I think the Government should give consideration to this question with a view to making the railways easily passable by means of subways, instead of as at present shutting the eye to the people crossing the line. As it is, people must cross Stirling Highway, a few yards away, and the traffic there is very great, whereas there is only a train every ten minutes or so. I hope the Government will consider removing the present obstructions and placing wooden ways over the lines so that ladies will not have to goose-step when they want to get across. It would save a lot of time and would not cost very much money. I believe it would be an improvement.

I trust the session will not be too long. I hope members will be given ample time to fight their seats and that we shall not see too many sad gaps after the election. I am sorry to know that six retirements have already been announced—those of the members for Collie, Bunbury, Mt. Hawthorn, Wagin, Irwin-Moore and Forrest. That will be a large gap with which to begin a new session. The number is greater, I think, than has ever been the case during the few years I have been here. I hope that quite a lot of the rest of us will be back in Parliament again. I do not know how many the Opposition parties want to get back in order to make a difference. I have not worked it out.

The Premier: They have worked it out.

Mr. NORTH: It is always nice when we see our friends back for a new session. I have enjoyed my time in Parliament. I have not advanced very far. It is not pleasant

to be at the end of the track in the benches after such a long time here, but it has been nice to be here.

On motion by Mr. Styants, debate adjourned.

COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying the personnel of session committees appointed by that House.

House adjourned at 8.53 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 1st August, 1946.

Questions: Housing, as to permits and construction	PA
Chandler Alunite Works, as to salaries and Federal subsidy	
Milk supply, as to inter-departmental committee's report	
Address-in-reply, third day	

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

QUESTIONS.

HOUSING.

As to Permits and Construction.

Hon. H. SEDDON asked the Chief Secretary:

1, What is the total number of housing building permits issued to the 30th June of each of the years 1943, 1944, 1945, and 1946 and

- how many of these were in the metropolitan area;
- how many in the country;
- how many on the Goldfields?

2, What is the total number of houses erected in the above areas to the same dates—

- in the metropolitan area;
- in the country;
- on the Goldfields?

3, What was the number under construction in each area at the 30th June, 1946?

4, Of the above, how many were erected under the Commonwealth-State Housing Rental Scheme?

5, How many were erected under the Workers' Homes Scheme?

6, How many for returned soldiers?

7, How many were erected for other owners?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

1, The total number of house-building permits (including letters of sponsorship) issued by the Department of War Organisation of Industry, and the Workers' Homes Board during the undermentioned periods was as follows:—

1942-43, 196; 1943-44, 438; 1944-45, 882; 1945-46, 1,483.

(a), (b) and (c).—Figures are available for the metropolitan and extra-metropolitan areas respectively, as from January, 1945. They are as follows:—

Six months ended June, 1945.—Metropolitan area, 280; extra-metropolitan area, 230.

Six months ended June, 1945-46.—Metropolitan area, 866; extra-metropolitan area, 617.

Separate figures are not available for the Goldfields area.

2 and 3, Statistics of building operations were not collected prior to 1945-46. Collected figures for the March quarter, 1946 (the latest available) are considered to be reasonably complete. They show that 203 houses were completed during the period and that 586 dwellings were under construction as at the end of the period. Separate statistics are not available for the areas referred to.

4, The number of houses erected and completed under the Commonwealth-State Rental Housing Scheme as at the 30th June, 1946, was 293. 327 houses were in course of construction at the 30th June, 1946.

5, The number of houses erected and completed under the Workers' Homes Scheme during the years 1943 to 1946, inclusive:—

1943, nil; 1944, 1; 1945, 5; 1946, nil; total, 6.

6 and 7, Information is not available as to the proportion of homes erected for soldiers and other owners.

CHANDLER ALUNITE WORKS.

As to Salaries and Federal Subsidy.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER asked the Chief Secretary:

1, What salary is paid to the manager of the Lake Campion Alunite Works?

2, The amount of individual salaries paid to other members on the administrative staff?

3, Have any payments been made to the Analytical Department in connection with the works?

4, Has any subsidy been received from the Commonwealth Government?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

1, £1,000 per annum.

2, Practically all the administrative work is carried out in the offices of the Department of Industrial Development, Perth, in association with the ordinary work of that Department.

3, No.

4, No, but an application is to be made to the Commonwealth Government for the payment of a subsidy on the same basis as is now being paid on potash imported into Australia.

MILK SUPPLY.

As to Inter-Departmental Committee's Report.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP asked the Chief Secretary:

Will the Minister lay on the Table of the House the report to the Minister for Agriculture of the Inter-Departmental Committee which was appointed last year to advise upon the milk supply?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

The report will be made available as requested.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Third Day.

Debate resumed from the 30th July.

HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH (Metropolitan) [4.48]: Mr. Bennetts, in whose name the adjournment stands, intimated to me yesterday evening that it would not be convenient for him to speak this afternoon. May I at the outset join with other members

in warmly congratulating you, Sir, on your appointment to the high office of President of this Chamber. It is a little more than a third of a century ago that you and I entered this House together, and I think I can safely say that, sitting alongside each other for the first two or three years on one of the back benches, we established a friendship that will endure.

Looking back to our first session here together, and having in mind the references that the previous speakers have made to the Government's activities in trading concerns, I am reminded that a good deal of that first session was devoted to stormy, lengthy and continued debate on the question of the purchase of the Perth tramways. I have never had any occasion to regret my opposition to that purchase. Those of us who opposed it were defeated by a very narrow majority, and I am still inclined to say that had the purchase not been agreed to it would have saved the citizens and taxpayers a great deal of money. It would have proved of tremendous benefit to the citizens of Perth because, under the terms of the concession, long ere this the whole concern would have fallen into the hands of the City Council without any cost whatever to the ratepayers. I believe, too, that it would have been of advantage to the citizens and to the travelling public. The only people so far as I can see who benefitted by the purchase were the shareholders in the company who got a great deal more than their shares were worth on the open market and, indeed, a great deal more than those shares could possibly have been worth in view of the rapidly terminating period of the concession.

I think that the purchase of the Perth tramways opened up a sort of new avenue in State trading. One of the first results arising from the purchase was the necessity for establishing an electric light and power plant. In view of what has happened recently and of the public agitation for inquiry and an investigation regarding the performance of the East Perth power plant, I think it might not be out of place to say something about the history of that undertaking. A Bill for the establishment of that plant came before this Chamber in 1915. Again I was amongst those who strongly opposed it. On my motion papers were laid on the Table of the House, and I think they comprised the largest volume of papers ever

laid on the Table. Two or three taxi cabs were required to bring the papers to Parliament House. The then Minister, Mr. Drew very properly appealed to members to release the papers as soon as possible because some of them were in almost daily use. I think I can claim that those who opposed the purchase complied with that request, so that the papers were returned after a very few days. However, we did keep those papers long enough for some members to look through them.

Amongst those who devoted some time to the task was the late Hon. J. F. Allen. I have been looking up the old debates that took place in 1915 and these are some of the points that Mr. Allen dug up from the papers. First of all, why was a site selected that was practically a swamp and involved the expenditure of £40,000 on foundations? The advising engineers, Messrs. Merz and McLellan, gave two reasons for establishing the site there. One was that the Swan, being a constantly fresh-water stream, so it was thought, would at all seasons of the year give an abundance of fresh water. I have always wondered why there was not at the time some local adviser who could have checked that and told Messrs. Merz and McLellan that the Swan River was not a constantly fresh water stream. Another reason for selecting that site was that coal would be mined at Collie, sent by rail to Bunbury and then brought up the coast by steamer and up-river to the works. Mr. Allen, in commenting on that, said that, though he was without any expert knowledge on the matter, he would venture to predict that not one ton of coal from Collie would come to the works in that way.

There was a far more important matter than the selection of the site. That was the decision respecting the type of plant. Why was a 40 cycle unit selected in preference to a 50 cycle unit? The files showed that in the first instance Messrs. Merz and McLellan advised in favour of a 50 cycle unit. This, during a visit of the then Premier to London, was altered to a 40 cycle unit and the reason given for the alteration was that a 40 cycle unit would be more suitable for the electrification of the railways through the ranges. That was more than 30 years ago. The plant then purchased has become pretty well worn out and yet I do not know that there is even at present any strong idea

with regard to the electrification of the railways. However, that is what happened then.

I think that any Royal Commission that might be appointed to inquire into these matters would be more than justified in considering—I do not know if there is much profit to be gained from going back for 30 years—why was it that the Government, when deciding to set up a plant of practically double the capacity of the original one—this was only about 10 or 11 years ago—still sticks to the 40 cycle instead of changing to the 50 cycle. I happened to be looking through an excellent little book published some 20 years ago, in which the author, speaking of electrification generally had this to say—

Modern current supply is almost exclusively alternating; that is, the current changes its direction many times (usually 50) per second.

That was written 20 years ago. It may be asked why only 10 years ago that course was adopted by the Government, on what advice and what reasons were given in support of that advice, when it decided to erect a plant of double the size of the original installation and to still retain the old 40 cycle unit. I have been at some pains to inquire as to what is likely to be the additional cost of the transfer now from the 40 cycle to the 50 cycle unit. I understand that the new plant at Fremantle is to be on the 50 cycle basis. I have endeavoured to find out what is likely to be the cost compared with what it would have been had the transfer been made 10 or 11 years ago. What would have been the difference in the cost to the Government and what would have been the difference in the cost of the transfer to industry and private householders?

Following upon inquiries I have made from different people far more competent to express an opinion on this matter than I am. I have secured information that shows that great disabilities will be suffered by the users of the current on the basis of 40 cycles instead of 50 cycles. In that respect I want to point out that in every other part of the world except, I believe, in two places where there are 40 cycle units, the 50 cycle unit has been found the most suitable for use. As it is, the disadvantages to domestic users of electric current have been considerable. There is cause for some complaint that no policy has been laid down by the authorities as to their intentions with regard to the

change-over. The cost of the changing over of the motors and the altering of the plant by the introduction of reduction gears or the change-over of existing gears cannot be assessed.

I asked a man who is some sort of authority on the subject—although I do not propose to disclose his name—what would be the approximate cost of transferring to the new system when the South Fremantle works are established, firstly, to the Government; secondly, to industries; and thirdly, to the average householder. His reply to the first question was that it was impossible to ascertain without months of intensive investigation. To the second question the answer was that industry does not expect to pay anything and definitely cannot stand the burden. He gave the same answer to the third question. I also inquired what would have been the cost had the transfer been made 10 years ago, and two or three experts have told me that the cost then would have been infinitely lower than it will be now. I then inquired whether, if provision had been made in the extension 10 years ago for a 50 cycle unit; the cost of changing all industrial motors would have been limited by the number of motors then in operation.

In 10 years the increase in industry, and consequently in the use of electric motors, has been enormous. Therefore, the cost to be faced now includes all electric motors, and as present day costs have swollen considerably as against 10 years ago, it means that the expense of the additional installation will be very much higher than it would have been at the earlier date. Furthermore, electrical equipment on 40 cycles is approximately 25 per cent. dearer than on 50 cycles. Therefore, all motors installed since 1917 have cost 25 per cent. more than they would have cost had it been 50 cycles. Surely we and the public are entitled to know on whose advice this second plant on the 40 cycle system was installed and what reasons were given for it, because I think it is obvious that that advice will cost the taxpayer, will cost industry and will cost the private householder a great deal. Another statement has been made to me, which I fervently hope has no foundation in fact. It is that until the South Fremantle power plant is erected there will always be a distinct possibility of fur-

ther breakdowns such as we experienced a few weeks ago. I do think there is ample justification for a full inquiry into the whole matter of the East Perth power house, and that one of the matters which should be investigated is on whose advice a 40 cycle plant was installed only ten years ago and what was that advice.

Of course, it is not only in regard to the matters I have referred to that the losses on the State activities have been enormous. Can we regard other than with disquiet the fact that last year the losses on the railways alone were greater than the total expenditure for the year on the education of our children? To me it is an appalling fact—the losses on the railways alone for one year exceeded the total cost of the education of our children! A matter to which we shall probably have to give some consideration—although I see no reference to it in the Speech—is the question of unification of railway gauges. It will not do for us to forget that any money the Commonwealth contributes towards this unification, whether it is spent in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, here or elsewhere, will come in part out of our own pocket. And a still more important point: How is that money to be obtained? So far there has been no authoritative statement.

We know, at least I think we do, that there are only three ways by which a huge sum of money—because it is a huge sum—can be obtained. One way is by taxation, and I should think that in view of the fact that the work will not earn anything—it will not be directly productive—taxation would be the right way. But can we contemplate increased taxation as having any other effect except to paralyse, if not completely destroy, industry? The second method is by loan. There, again, since the work will not pay interest, it will involve increasing the burden of taxation. But there is a third method. I am now quoting from a newspaper report. The Federal Transport Minister (Mr. Ward) hopes to complete an agreement. He said that the general rail standardisation scheme for Australia would cost more than £200,000,000, but that Australia was spending £1,500,000 a day when the war ended and the war did not end because Australia had run out of money. Is not that an extraordinary argument for a Minister of the

Crown to use? He says that through war we were compelled to spend £1,500,000 a day therefore we have countless more millions spend. He proceeds—

Great public works, whether State Federal, or carried out by semi-government bodies, should be financed through the Commonwealth Bank.

That is carrying out a policy which Labor has never yet repudiated, although the present Prime Minister and Treasurer has frequently pointed out it is impossible that public works and social services can be carried out by Commonwealth Bank credit without loans or taxation. Where is a policy of that sort likely to lead us? Mr. Ward, of course, following Lenin's advice. Lenin said, "If you would destroy capitalism and establish Communism, debase the currency. Once you do that, once you destroy the faith of the people in the currency of the country that country is ripe for some form of totalitarian rule. It was the destruction of the currency that brought about Communism in Russia, Nazism in Germany and Fascism in Italy. Whether Mr. Ward desires to establish Communism here or not I do not know but he is undoubtedly following Lenin's advice, "If you would destroy capitalism and establish Communism debase the currency. But a day or two ago this was published in the Press—

The Commonwealth will pay a portion of the interest on the loan.

Hon. A. Thomson: That is the bait.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: That is a contradiction of Mr. Ward's idea. I do think it is time that the people of Australia hear some authoritative statement from the Commonwealth Government on this matter of finance. It will not be long before the Commonwealth will be appealing to the people of Australia for a further loan. I have spent a great deal of time and done all I could in support of Commonwealth loans in the past, but I am rapidly getting in that frame of mind that I should like to have, not for myself but for those to whom I appeal, to subscribe to the loan, some definite statement of Government policy. Is the Government policy the policy expressed by Mr. Ward, a policy which would undoubtedly debase the currency and to some extent destroy the value of the bonds to which the people subscribe?

I do not intend to go at any length into a number of the features of the Speech; I can reserve my opinion on those matters until the promised Bills come before us. There are, however, two closely related matters to which I would like to make reference. The first is in regard to education. I confess to some disappointment at the very guarded paragraph in the Speech that necessary facilities will soon be available to give effect to the decision to raise the school-leaving age. That is a hope expressed by the Government—I do not know that the Government could have gone any further—but I do not see in that paragraph any determination on the part of the Government to give education its proper place in the priorities of public expenditure. I speak with some knowledge of this matter, because I was for seven years Minister for Education and I know the extreme difficulty that I had, the intense opposition I had to face from members of my party and my own Government. I know what a hard job it was to get those four district high schools established. Still the same old feeling prevails that we must apply to education just such moneys as we can spare. "Money must be found for this and that; we hope that it can be found for education." The view I have always taken—I can claim consistency in this—is that education should be one of the first priorities, one of the things for which money must be found. I do not see any disposition to regard it in that light at present. Possibly there may be a considerable awakening of public opinion. That is the only thing likely to secure for education its proper place. The public will have to say that they want it and demand it.

The other subject which I regard as closely allied to education—though some members may not think so—is the promised Bill for the control of betting. I do not believe we will ever be able to control betting by the laws we pass and things of that sort, and that we will only control it by building up a better standard amongst the people, by building up a taste for better things. I have never had any particular objection to betting on moral grounds. My objection has always been on economic grounds because of its gross waste. Take the so-called charities sweep! It is called a charities sweep because 1½d. out of each

half-crown goes to charities. Does the public really understand that on every half-crown that they put into a ticket, 1s. 3½d. only runs for them, and the rest is eaten up in various forms of expenses? In my morning walks I usually pass by half-a-dozen kiosks in which lottery tickets are sold, and where the rate of commission paid is 3d. on every ticket. There are also other expenses associated with the sale of these tickets. There are the contributions to the Perth Hospital and to the country hospitals which should be a charge upon general revenue. When you put all these things down you find that 1½d. goes to charities, and that is the justification for giving to the sweeps the title of charity sweeps. I noticed in the newspaper recently that certain objections had been raised to the offering of these tickets for sale in, I think, Singapore.

The Chief Secretary: In the Straits Settlements.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: The best way to prevent the investment of such money in Singapore would be to declare clearly and in unmistakable terms what is done with the money. The Singapore people, accustomed as they are to a fairly hard life, would not be very keen to put their money into a concern in which only half of it was running in their favour. I see no harm in repeating a story I told some time ago. An astute gentleman was worming his way into the confidence of a chieftain of one of the Pacific Islands. The chieftain dismissed all his other advisers and placed this man in full charge. He soon discovered he wanted money and conceived the idea of a sweepstake. He said, "If you put your money into a sweepstake 90 per cent. of it will be returned to you and 10 per cent. of it will be used for public purposes." The people flocked to it and the sweeps could not be got through quickly enough. He then found that 10 per cent. was not enough, and announced that the prize money would be 80 per cent. of that which was put in and 20 per cent. would be used for public purposes. That was the end of the sweep. The people would not touch it when only 80 per cent. of their money was running for them. Yet our own enlightened people fall over each other to support a sweepstake when only 50 per cent. of the money runs for them, and the sweep-

stake itself is dignified as a subsidy for charities merely from the fact that $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. goes to charity.

I now wish to refer to the question of starting-price bookmaking. I say we will never get rid of that sort of thing except by establishing a better standard amongst the people. How many people patronising starting-price bookmakers reflect on the cheerfulness with which those bookmakers pay fines of £20, £50, £70, or £80, and simply carry on their business? To any normal, intelligent person would there not exist in his mind this idea, "I cannot be getting a fair run for my money when a starting-price bookmaker can afford to pay these sums in fines and risk imprisonment and that sort of thing." It is certainly an unproductive industry and destructive to the community, but I do not think that any laws that are passed will ever cure it. We must try to build up a better standard of thinking and a better standard of enjoyment amongst the people. Some time ago there was a Chinese gentleman who wrote a little book after a visit to Australia. In it he referred to our racecourses as "places where loud-mouthed gentlemen preyed upon the simple-minded."

Of recent years I do not think there is any doubt the Government has encouraged this betting activity, this gambling spirit. It has sown the wind and now it is reaping the whirlwind. One of the most astonishing things is that citizens who have the confidence of their constituents to the extent that they are elected as mayors of important municipalities are constantly referring to their people as being debarred from the privileges of betting. What sort of standard have we reached when people in such positions speak of the "privilege of betting," the privilege of throwing their money away? It is astonishing to me and I hope that before long there will be some substantial improvement in the position.

I should like to deal with one or two other matters in passing. I have contended for a long time, and I notice that the Prime Minister and Federal Treasurer has often put up the same argument, that there are two things essential to the future of Australia. One is that we should establish and maintain a volume of exports sufficient to pay our overseas obligations and enable us to buy those things we must have if our

standard of living is to be maintained and improved, and our resources developed. The second thing is that we maintain the purchasing power of the Australian pound. Let not members run away with the idea that these things will be easy of accomplishment. Like every other young country, our three principal needs in the past have been people, capital for the development of our resources, and a market for our goods. All these things have been provided by England. To what extent will the Old Country be able to provide them now? It is an inescapable fact that for many years before the outbreak of the last war Britain's imports exceeded in value her exports by £1,000,000 a day. This was made good by resources that have largely disappeared. No matter how anxious Great Britain may be to assist Australia and the other Dominions, the sooner we wake up to the existing situation and the necessity for self-reliance, the better will it be for us.

There is one final matter upon which I desire to touch, namely, to offer my congratulations to the Chief Secretary on the appointment that has been offered to him. I am very glad to hear he has accepted the post. I can speak with authority on this matter because I occupied the position of Agent-General for a longer period than any other Western Australian has done. I say without hesitation that it is the best gift looking at it from many angles—because it presents opportunities for acquiring knowledge and offers also many advantages of a financial character—within the province of the Government. With still more certainty I say the Government has selected the best possible man for the post. I trust that the Chief Secretary will enjoy every minute of his stay in London, that the conditions of the appointment will be satisfactory to the circumstances and that during his term of office, whatever Government may be in charge here, he will experience the same courtesy, the same co-operation, the same consideration that he received during my ten years of office, nearly the whole of that time under a Labour Government.

On motion by Hon. E. H. H. Hall, debated and adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.12 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 1st August, 1946.

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

QUESTIONS.

CEMENT.

As to Supplies for Farmers.

Mr. TELFER asked the Premier:

1, What progress has been made in creating an increased supply of cement for farmers?

2, When may it be reasonable to anticipate that farmers may have arrear orders supplied?

The PREMIER replied:

1, The supply has been curtailed in the past by unavoidable circumstances, but two kilns are now operating at the Swan Portland Cement Works.

2, A substantial portion of the output is being devoted to outstanding orders of primary producers, and if both kilns continue in operation without interruption, it is anticipated that such orders will be cleared within two or three months.

RURAL RELIEF FUND ACT.

(a) As to Repayment of Advances.

Mr. TELFER asked the Minister for Lands:

1, What was the total amount advanced by the Commonwealth for debt adjustment under the Rural Relief Fund Act?

2, Was this money made available by the Commonwealth as a free grant to farmers; if not, what were the conditions?

3, How many farmers have been assisted under the Act?

4, How many farmers have had their debts partly or wholly written off?

5, Can the State write off all the advances; if so, will this be done?

The MINISTER replied:

1, £1,283,000.

2, No. The money was made available to the States under a Commonwealth Act known as Loan (Farmers' Debts Adjustment), No. 23 of 1935. The money was granted to the States. Provision was made in the Commonwealth Act for the money to be advanced to farmers and for any repayments to be used for further debt adjustment, and these repayments to be deemed as money granted to the State.

3, 3,733 farmers.

4, 363 farmers have had the advances made to them, partly or wholly written off.

5, The State Government does not wish to prejudice any case by premature statements, but investigations are proceeding to see what action would be required both to write off the outstanding amounts and to clear the repayment account. The State is in consultation with the Commonwealth on the matter as the Commonwealth Act binds the State in some directions. When the State Government is in the position to consider the Commonwealth attitude and reach conclusions, a public statement will be made by the Premier.

(b) As to Winding-up of Fund, etc.

Mr. TELFER (without notice) asked the Premier: In view of the replies given by the Minister for Lands regarding farmers' debts adjustment matters: 1, Is there any likelihood of the balance of the moneys being made available to the State? 2, If that is unlikely, what further steps is he taking to make legal the writing-off of outstanding amounts and the winding up of the fund?

The PREMIER replied: There is a total of £2,000,000 still unpaid under the original Act which made available to the States moneys for farmers' debt adjustment. The last payment to this State was a few years ago and amounted to about £24,000. Repeated attempts have been made by my predecessor to have further amounts made available to this State for further debt adjustment. The position, when last considered by the Commonwealth on application by the States, was that had such sums been available for further debt adjustment, they would have been made available to the detriment of other sections of the loan