

Does that not point to something wanting? Surely the members of this Chamber were not altogether without commonsense when they disallowed the lighting regulations. These may have been necessary on the coast. I shall not say what Mr. Parker said about the Rottnest Island lights and other lights, but I maintain that drivers of motor cars should be allowed to use more light.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Similar regulations have been rescinded in South Australia.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: It will be said that the reply referred to metropolitan accidents. I do not want it to be thought for one moment that I am concerned only about people in the country districts. Such a number of accidents in so short a space of time surely deserves the close attention of the Government. It is with regret that I must enter my protest as an individual against the unwarranted interference with the sovereign rights of this State that we have witnessed during the past week with regard to the basic wage. I am a Western Australian born and bred and am neither a secessionist nor a unificationist. Australia is a wonderful country.

Hon. G. W. Miles: It was the most diabolical act ever committed by a Government.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: We should remember that we have one flag and one destiny; we should get together and do the best we can for our country. The matter I mentioned was before the Arbitration Court and we were promised in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech that it would receive the attention of this Parliament. I regret exceedingly the action taken.

On motion by Hon. H. Seddon, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 3.20 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 11th August, 1942.

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

QUESTION—AGRICULTURE,

Marginal Areas.

Mr. BERRY asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Is it the intention of the Govern-

ment to include marginal area farmers in the restricted acreage compensation to be paid to wheatgrowers in this State? 2, Are farmers in the marginal areas who have received no assistance under the reconstruction scheme to be permitted to grow wheat if they so desire?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST (for the Minister for Agriculture) replied: 1 and 2, These matters are now being considered and the Government hopes to be able to make an announcement at an early date.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motions by Mr. Wilson, leave of absence granted to Mr. Styants (Kalgoorlie) for one month and to Mr. Holman (Forrest) for the remainder of the session on the ground of military service; and to the Premier (Hon. J. C. Willcock, Geraldton) for one month on the ground of ill-health.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fourth Day.

Debate resumed from the 6th August.

MR. NEEDHAM (Perth) [2.20]: Nearing as we are the end of the third year of the war, we find ourselves today in a very serious and grave situation. We have passed through the horrors of Dunkirk and we realised then the position in which the Allied Nations were placed. Two more years have been added to the struggle, and unfortunately today the news given to us in the public Press does not suggest that the Allied Nations are in any better position than they were during the fateful days of Dunkirk. Russia, after having put up a magnificent struggle, finds herself in a very dangerous position; we have no reason to feel comfortable regarding the situation in Libya and in the south-west Pacific, right at our doors, we find that the enemy has gained rather than lost. Therefore I say that the outlook is not at all bright.

This serious situation, however, should prove only an incentive to the whole of the race to still greater effort and to increased determination to continue the struggle until the curse of the Nazi hordes is removed from the earth. We in Australia now realise that these are not days for complacency. Whatever we have done in the past three years, we must do more in the immediate future if we are going to hold this continent for

democracy. Events should compel the least-thinking citizens of this country to appreciate the gravity of the danger and to leave nothing undone to try to improve the situation.

The Leader of the Opposition quoted from a pamphlet issued by H. K. Watson dealing with the matter of uniform taxation, which is now the law of the Commonwealth. I also intend to refer to the document and particularly to that portion giving the opinion of Mr. A. A. Calwell, M.H.R. for Melbourne.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I quoted that.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I also shall quote it. This is the portion I have particularly in mind—

I think the High Court would give not a legal judgment but a political one. High Courts give political judgments and High Court judges are politically-minded. Some come from political parties.

I do not agree with the reference to the Court. In my opinion the High Court of Australia has nobly upheld the traditions of the British Judiciary in all the important decisions it has given. Whether in the direction of the interpretation of the Constitution or in the decision of other legal matters, I do not know of any important determination arrived at by that Court in which its members can be said to have been actuated by political motives. I shall refer to one extremely important judgment of the High Court which was delivered in 1925 or thereabouts on the question of the deportation of Johnson and Walsh. It will be recalled that those two men earned for themselves a most unenviable reputation in many quarters of the Commonwealth. So notorious did they become in certain activities that a special tribunal was created by the then Commonwealth Government to try them in order to ascertain whether or not they should be deported. I was present on one or two occasions during the course of the hearing. If my memory serves me aright, the chairman was the late Mr. Canning.

The inquiry lasted some weeks, and eventually it was decided that Johnson and Walsh should be deported. Political feeling was high at the time and I venture to say that, if a referendum had been taken, the decision would have been confirmed. Johnson and Walsh, as British subjects, appealed to the High Court. They contended that they should not be deported. Legal

argument was adduced before the High Court; and, as I said, political feeling at the time was higher than I have ever known it to be in the Commonwealth, with one exception, and that was on the conscription issue. Despite that high political feeling, however, the High Court unanimously decided against the deportation of the men. That is one instance where the members of the High Court worthily upheld the traditions of the British judiciary. They judged the case on its merits and their decision was characteristic of all the judgments of the High Court during the period it has been in existence.

I shall quote from another paragraph of the document issued by Mr. Watson, headed "Spooner's Smudge"—

The exigencies of wartime finance are merely a convenient smokescreen behind which this "uniform" legislation has been put through with the concurrence of all parties in the Federal Parliament—a cloak under which to give it some appearance of legality.

So that if anyone is to be castigated or blamed for the uniform taxation legislation, which has hit our State so heavily, no particular party can be singled out for criticism or condemnation because, according to Mr. Watson, all parties in the Commonwealth Parliament agreed to it, and under that agreement they manufactured a cloak of alleged legality. That paragraph might be remembered in days to come when members of both Houses will be appearing before their masters to give an account of their stewardship. According to Mr. Watson, all parties are equally blameworthy for this legislation. I shall make one further reference from the document, to the portion dealing with the need for constitutional reform. Mr. Watson says—

Morally, not legally, there has been a distinct breach of the Commonwealth Constitution. By the passage of this legislation, the Federal Parliament has said in effect: "To hell with the Constitution; to hell with the States."

Remember, all parties are saddled with the blame for the expression "to hell with the Constitution; to hell with the States." The Department of War Organisation of Industry has certainly been making itself felt throughout the Commonwealth in regard to the rationing of various commodities, food, clothing, etc. I hope the exigencies of the war will not necessitate a further tightening up and a stricter rationing. The department certainly went a little too far in the

manner in which it dealt with the goldmining industry of this State. That industry could well have been left alone, but it has for the time being been crippled.

The State's heavy industries are undoubtedly suffering from the competition of the other States. We certainly started much behind scratch when this titanic struggle commenced. The further we have gone, the severer has been the handicap for this State in establishing industry to help in the prosecution of the war. The Department of Industrial Development has done much good work in that respect, and is still doing so; but, if we cannot get our just share of the heavy industries required for the prosecution of the war, we can do well in the field of food production. I see no reason why we should continue to do in wartime what we were doing for years in peace-time, sending millions of pounds annually to our eastern neighbours for foodstuffs which we could manufacture in this State. I could never altogether understand the mentality of those persons who, despite all efforts to the contrary, despite the work of the Council of Industrial Development, despite all the Government's propaganda, still send millions of pounds to the Eastern States for those commodities. Whereas that course was bad in times of peace, it is worse now. It is the Government's duty, as well as the duty of Parliament, to concentrate on the manufacture and storage of food which undoubtedly will be required when the war is over, when our soldiers shall have sheathed their swords and again returned to the plough. It will be a very hungry world then.

We are a great wheat-producing country, and will experience a bounteous season again this year. Our difficulty will be to dispose of the crop. It cannot be sent oversea, as hitherto, because of the lack of transport. We are storing more wheat now than during the last war. If we can do that successfully it will be an asset when peace is restored. We have plenty of opportunities, and material for the manufacture and storage of food. The only commodities we require from our eastern neighbours are sugar and rice. We can produce everything else ourselves. We could manufacture food not only for our own consumption, but should be in a position to store it against future eventualities. Room exists for improvement in this

matter. We should adopt the American method. For years they have said, "We eat what we can, and what we can't eat we can." We should do that against the time when food will be needed.

The Government has at last recognised the value of our alunite deposits at Lake Campion, and I understand good progress is being made with the assembling of buildings and plant on the site. If shipping space can be obtained for certain necessary items—and if enemy action does not intervene—the production of potash should commence by the end of the year. Other industries connected with the extraction of potash will help us in the way of fertiliser. We should be able to manufacture explosives in this State, particularly cordite. We have no cordite factory here because it is a tertiary and not a secondary industry. The reason why the Commonwealth Government has not established a local cordite factory is because we have not the by-products necessary to make it. I have a letter from a citizen of Perth, from which I shall read one or two extracts bearing directly on this matter. In dealing with the manufacture of cordite, this man says—

I find that the reason (or the chief reason) why we have no cordite factory here is that cordite is a tertiary not a secondary industry. I mean that the immediate raw materials of cordite are themselves by-products (not main products) of secondary industries this State does not at present possess (though the ultimate raw materials exist here in abundance). I understand that if these intermediate industries were started a cordite factory would follow, not otherwise. As the military products of these intermediate industries are by-products, not main products, not unnaturally the Federal Government says that it is for the States to get these intermediate industries going.

For instance, the cordite requires: (a) cheap nitric acid. This is made from the air by Haber's process, and we have as yet no nitrogen fixation plant here. In time of peace the plant would be used to make sodium nitrate (if there were an alkali industry to produce the necessary sodium carbonate, and we have plenty of salt lakes) and soda nitrate is a valuable fertiliser. If dressed with soda nitrate (1 cwt. per acre), superphosphate (3 cwt. per acre), potash sulphate (1 cwt. per acre), even the poorest Perth sand produces champion crops of oats, vegetables, etc. But because fertiliser production is the main use of a nitric acid plant and cordite production only a secondary use, the Federal Government not unnaturally takes the view that it is a State matter to get this secondary industry going. Once it is going a Federal cordite works would

be a big customer. And that is where it links with Lake Campion potash production.

That letter is an interesting contribution to the question of linking up various industries, not only in regard to the help we can give in the prosecution of the war, but also in relation to the establishment of industries which will be invaluable to this State after the war. Again, as a result of the insistency of this Government and the action of the Council for Industrial Development, the Commonwealth Government has agreed to enforce priorities for essential goods, and actually this is being conducted by the Shipping Board. It is time that was done. Material which was available here was being shipped from the Eastern States. As a result, difficulty was experienced in getting necessary materials for manufacturing purposes. The latest action of the Commonwealth Government will remove those difficulties. They will in future be considerably minimised even if they do not disappear altogether.

In the course of his speech the Leader of the Opposition referred to the fact that a man had been brought from the Eastern States to settle a dispute in Western Australia. The hon. member wanted to know: Had we not men in this State able to settle industrial disputes? We have! We can find within the confines of the State men capable of settling any dispute that occurs. The importation of this gentleman—a Federal Conciliation Commissioner—from the Eastern States to settle the dispute which occurred in the Midland Junction Workshops was no reflection on the ability of any man in this State. That was done under the provisions of the National Security Act!

Hon. C. G. Latham: That Act is very useful to the State Government.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I am stating a fact. The dispute occurred in connection with the manufacture of munitions, which is carried out under the control of the Commonwealth Government. As the result of regulations issued by that Government, tribunals were appointed and machinery set up to handle industrial disputes. Federal industrial commissioners were appointed under the National Security Regulations and thus control of the manufacture of munitions was not within the jurisdiction of the State authorities. Consequently, a Federal determina-

tion had to be made after the case had been heard by a Federal industrial commissioner. That is why the officer was sent to Western Australia. It certainly represented no reflection upon anyone in this State. I am glad to say that Western Australia has been remarkably free from industrial disputes. The one I have just referred to lasted for eight or nine days and that and a dispute with the shop assistants which continued for a couple of days, represent the only two industrial troubles experienced in Western Australia since the outbreak of war.

The Leader of the Opposition also referred to the Manpower Board. I agree with him that it has not worked smoothly. Nevertheless, despite the disabilities the members of that body experienced they have carried out wonderfully good work. Their activities were greatly handicapped because of the overlapping that has occurred with other branches of Federal operations including the Department of Labour, the Allied Works Council, the Department for the Co-ordination of Industry and the military authorities. Nevertheless good work has been done by the Manpower Board.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Any good work done was in spite of the conditions that obtained.

Mr. NEEDHAM: That is so. Steps have now been taken to arrange a system of planned co-ordination regarding the efforts of the various authorities I have mentioned, and I believe that if an effective co-ordination plan can be evolved, the machinery of the Manpower Board will in future operate much more smoothly than it has in the past.

Mr. Seward: It will need to work much more smoothly.

Mr. NEEDHAM: The member for West Perth referred to the financial relationship between the Commonwealth and the States, and deplored the position. He was not very enamoured of the Federal uniform taxation legislation. I feel confident that the trend will not cease with the provision for uniform income taxation. Already the collection of the entertainment tax on a uniform basis is indicated. Members should appreciate the fact that the position regarding the financial relationship between the Commonwealth and the States did not commence to cause apprehension with the provision for uniform income taxation. The thin end of the wedge was introduced by means of the Financial Agreement which has been incorporated in the Constitution. Whatever rights

the States had then, sovereign or otherwise, have been gradually whittled away since that period.

We were supposed to enjoy sovereign rights, but once the Financial Agreement was incorporated in the Constitution we did not possess even half-sovereign rights. The State Treasurers became mendicants and for years they have had to go cap-in-hand to the Commonwealth Treasurer, who in turn had to approach the private banks to secure the necessary financial accommodation. Had the Commonwealth Bank been placed in the position it should have occupied years ago, the situation would not have become so intolerable. Under existing conditions even the Commonwealth Treasurer has had to approach the private banks to secure the wherewithal to carry on the services of the nation. I am very much afraid that whatever rights remain to the States will gradually be taken away. As a matter of fact, we are on the high road to unification. We cannot get away from it; we must have regard to facts as they are. However, unification cannot be achieved by means of the application of the National Security Regulations except for the time being. It will be for the people of the Commonwealth to determine whether there is to be a unified Australia.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Our people cannot determine that without the assistance of those living in the Eastern States.

Mr. NEEDHAM: A referendum will have to be taken before the Constitution can be altered to make unification a reality. The people of Western Australia will have their vote in common with the people of the Eastern States, and only by the will of a majority of the electors in a majority of the States can it be determined whether or not the Commonwealth Parliament shall take these added powers unto itself. Those powers are being used freely now and have been so used by the Commonwealth Parliament since the tocsin of war first sounded. The exercise of those powers will continue for a considerable time after peace is declared.

All this talk about the sovereign rights of the States reminds me of an incident in a police court in Melbourne a few years ago. A man had been injured as a result of a collision with a motor car and the case was being dealt with by the magistrate. Counsel for the plaintiff in the course of

his argument asked the police magistrate the question: "Have pedestrians no rights?" "Yes," replied the magistrate, "the last sad rites." So it is that until the people of Australia at a referendum determine the issue, the rights of the States are in much the same position as the pedestrians—they enjoy the last sad rites only. There is no doubt that members of Parliament, whether in the Federal or State arena, have responsibilities not only as to the prosecution of the war to a victorious conclusion, but also regarding the preparations for reconstruction. It is idle to say that we cannot plan for reconstruction at the same time as we are prosecuting a world-wide war.

We can do everything possible to plan for reconstruction without in any way impairing our war effort. Already we have had instalments of improved social conditions during the war period. First there was the granting of child endowment by the Menzies Government. That was done in the midst of our current anxieties. Following upon that, the Curtin Government made provision for widows pensions. For the last 40 years we have been talking about pensions for widows and now, in the midst of the greatest upheaval in history, the Commonwealth Government, despite all its preoccupation with the war effort, has introduced that social reform. Side by side with it increased pensions have been granted to invalids and the aged. Those examples furnish evidence that Australia can improve the social conditions of the people, and raise the standard of their living concurrently with taking its place in the world struggle against Nazi domination. If we do not lay the foundations of a planned policy for reconstruction, then we shall be shirking our responsibilities. We shall be recreant to the trust imposed upon us and, in a sense, will betray the men who are standing at their battle stations ready to defend every inch of Australia.

If we do not carry out our duty in this respect I am afraid the Commonwealth will have to face another series of depression years such as we experienced from 1930 to 1935-36. We shall see the curse of unemployment in our midst, the debasing spectacle of the dole keeping body and soul together on a pitiful advance of 7s. a week, and experience all the other misfortunes that characterised the depression period. Unless we plan now our reconstruction methods and

a long view is taken of the steps to be followed, Australia will be in a sorry plight. The State Parliament can do very little in dealing with war problems, but can do quite a lot in planning for future reconstruction. One member raised an objection by saying, "How can we do these things when at the same time we are piling up a huge indebtedness?" What is the use of talking about indebtedness? That phase does not bother the nations today. Money is nothing at all.

The Minister for Mines: Posterity can worry about that phase.

Mr. NEEDHAM: The indebtedness incurred as the result of the 1914-18 war has not yet been paid. Has any nation paid its debts to America? Has Germany paid her debts? Has Britain re-paid America?

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: Yes!

Mr. NEEDHAM: Not by a long way. Despite the huge indebtedness piled up in the past, see what the nations have done recently! Think what position Germany was in at the end of the previous war!

Mr. Marshall: Germany was bankrupt before the present war.

Mr. NEEDHAM: Germany was supposed to be down and out. Millions of marks were required to purchase a loaf of bread. Yet Germany was able to plunge the world into the greatest catastrophe of all history! Germany devoted all her energy and scientific knowledge to the manufacture of weapons of destruction.

Mr. Marshall: And her economy was not based on gold.

Mr. NEEDHAM: That is so. Now Germany has the world pretty well at her feet. Europe is held in chains and Russia is in grave peril. What is the use of saying we cannot prepare for a period of reconstruction wherein human values will prevail and human life will be regarded as sacred instead of being considered so much cannon-fodder? The member for West Perth referred also to the need for State Governments having more direct responsibilities in the prosecution of the war. I agree with him. It seems as if the States have not really been taken into the confidence of the Commonwealth in relation to the war. In peacetime State Governments have acted as agents for the Commonwealth Government in many ways—for instance, in regard to public works. That is an excellent idea, and what applied in time of peace under this head should also apply in time of war.

The Commonwealth Government might be a little franker with the States, and take them more completely into its confidence. If that were done, our war effort would benefit. Finally I express the hope that before long the situation in the Pacific and in other theatres of war will improve. If that hope should not be fulfilled, it will not really discourage us; for we do thoroughly realise that the track ahead of us is a long one with a steep grade. No matter how long the track or how steep the grade, the courage of our race will carry us through to victory.

MR. TONKIN (North-East Fremantle): I desire to address the House on the subject of departmental inquiries and their utter futility as a means of obtaining redress, effecting remedies, and eliminating waste and inefficiency. I propose to apply that generalisation to a particular inquiry of the R.A.A.F. in Western Australia, and intend to suggest a possible tribunal for the holding of such inquiries and how the tribunal might be put to work. I am somewhat reluctant to take this step, and do so only because I feel it is impossible to get anybody to move unless the step is taken. It will be necessary for me to encroach considerably on the time of members, and I crave their indulgence. My hope is that the serious nature of the disclosures which I shall have to make, and their great importance to the country, will justify the length of time which my explanation will occupy.

From time to time, doubtless, members have had occasion to ask for departmental inquiries. I have found several such occasions myself, and my experience has been that no departmental inquiry yields satisfactory results. Officials seem to be too prone to cover up one another's mistakes. Very rarely indeed is the truth elicited as a result of departmental inquiry. That fact is serious enough in peacetime, but in time of war, when it is necessary to rectify abuses quickly, the position becomes most tragic if the truth cannot be brought out. I assert most definitely that in existing circumstances it is almost impossible to prove any case, however clear it might be to a reasonable and honourable man.

Early this year I heard in Fremantle rumours of very harsh treatment a certain working man had received from the R.A.A.F. Those rumours were so persistent

that I made it my business to call upon the worker. Being told the object of my call, he was only too pleased to unburden himself—I can use no other term. He appeared to have been carrying a heavy load as the result of his treatment, and this was his opportunity to say what he had been wanting to say for a very long time. He told me that towards the end of 1941 he had endeavoured to obtain from the Ministry of Munitions, work that he could do in his workshop, which was quite well equipped. He had a very good lathe, and an oxy-acetylene welder, a power hacksaw, and an emery wheel. He was unsuccessful in obtaining contracts for war work; and then, when materials had become extremely difficult to obtain, he decided to close his shop and apply for employment at General Motors in Mosman Park. He was readily given work, being an old workman of the firm, and was employed on a war contract for making boats for pontoon bridges. He got that job about two days before Christmas.

In January he received a visit at the General Motors workshop from an officer of the R.A.A.F., who was accompanied by a State inspector of machinery. In order to interview him at the works it was necessary for these two men to apply at the office, and the maintenance engineer of General Motors took them to where the man was working. The R.A.A.F. officer asked him whether he was the proprietor of such and such a shop in Fremantle, and he said he was. The officer then said he had seen the shop and the machinery in it, and that the machinery should not lie idle but should be in production for the R.A.A.F. The officer gave him clearly to understand that if he did not care to relinquish his job and put his plant into production, his machinery would be seized. They said there was plenty of work for him to do and that they would be glad to have him making valve-guides for aeroplanes. It was arranged that he should apply at the R.A.A.F. on the following day at 10 a.m.

Accordingly the man terminated his employment with General Motors, who were sorry to lose him, and on the following day, by appointment, he attended at the R.A.A.F. at 10 a.m. He was kept waiting until 20 minutes to 2 p.m. Then he had his interview. Nothing whatever was said during that interview about the valve-guides, but he was shown the samples which I hold in my hand—

samples of flat bearings for operating tubes for aeroplanes—and he was asked whether he could make them. He replied, "Yes." Then he was told that blue-prints would be posted to him, that he could make his jigs, which are tools for manufacturing these particular things, and that then he could get on with the job. He mentioned that being a single man 37 years of age he was liable to be called up for service in the Army, and that he had in effect received notice that he would be called up within a few days. The Air Officer told him to inform the Army that he was going to work for the Air Force, that that would fix his position, and that he would have nothing further to worry about as his production would not be interrupted. Within a couple of days he had to attend the Army for examination and, as he had been instructed by the Air Officer, he said he was going to work for the Air Force. The Army officer told him to obtain a letter to that effect.

The next day he attended the Air Force, sought out the officer and asked for the letter. The officer said, "We furnish hundreds of those letters. Leave it to me; it will be all right." Then the workman said, "You promised to post the blue-prints down. You did not do that, and you might as well give them to me now I am here." The blue-prints were obtained, and together the officer and the workman went through them. Then the workman took them to his shop and proceeded to make what I have called jigs in readiness for the job. I hold a jig in my hand, and I have here also a number of these tools. They represent the hardest part of the job. Once the jigs are made to the correct size, it is really a mere routine matter to complete the job. I now show members the most intricate jig; it is the most intricate because of the unusual angles. I have here the jigs which this workman made in accordance with the blue-prints supplied to him by the R.A.A.F. The jigs which I have now shown to members took about three days to make, and with the material used are worth about £3. It is important to remember that cost, because I wish to deal with another aspect of the same matter later.

Having made the jigs and being ready to start, the workman was anxious to get going, and so he rang up the Air Force and asked to be supplied with the bronze castings which were to be made into these flat bearings.

as the finished article according to the pattern supplied. The officer said, "Very well; we will get the bearings down there." Two or three more days went by without any bearings arriving; therefore Watkins, which is the name of the workman, again rang up and asked for the castings. He was promised they would be down "very shortly." Another week went past. Once more he rang, and I may mention that it is not an easy matter to get in touch with the particular Air Force officer one wants.

Air Force officers being extremely busy, it is sometimes necessary to ring two or three times before one gets the officer one wants. Members will readily appreciate that point. However, Watkins had to continue ringing up from time to time for a period of about three weeks, still without any castings arriving. Then he said to himself, "I have done all I can. I suppose when they are ready to send the castings down, they will do so," and he let the matter go. He has not received the castings from that day to this, a period of eight months. His mates knew that he had been taken off a job, kept idle and lost his wages, and they spoke quite feelingly about the matter, with the result that there was much dissatisfaction in the district and nasty things were said about the Air Force.

Immediately I heard this story I proceeded to a telephone, rang the Air Force, and asked to be put in touch with the particular officer concerned. When I was connected with him, I told him the story briefly and asked him whether he remembered the incident. He said he did, but denied all the material facts. He said he had promised this man work, but that it was not his fault he did not receive the castings, and so on. I said, "There is so much inconsistency between your story and that of Watkins that the only way to decide the matter is for you to meet both of us and let us talk it over." This officer said, "All right, you bring him up and I will see him." I said, "You make an appointment and fix a time, and we shall be there." He replied, "I am too busy for that. I cannot fix a time. I do not know where I shall be. You come up here. If I am in, I will see you, and if I am not, somebody else will." I said, "That is no good to me. You fix any time you like, and make it to suit your convenience," whereupon he jammed down the telephone receiver.

I did not accept that. I rang the Air Force again and asked to be put on to somebody with authority. I arranged a meeting with Wing Commander McLean for 2 o'clock that day. When I arrived there, he told me it was not necessary for him to see me because he did not deal with that sort of thing, though I had told him previously what it was I wished to see him about. He told me it would be necessary to see Group Captain Charlesworth. I waited nearly an hour and, when I saw Group Captain Charlesworth, I asked him to make this particular officer, Flight-Lieutenant Bronder, arrange an appointment so that I could take Watkins up and discuss this question. Group-Captain Charlesworth said he would do so, and he did. The following day Watkins and I went to the Air Force and had a discussion with Bronder in the presence of Group-Captain Charlesworth. Group-Captain Charlesworth did not appear to me to be displaying very much interest in the proceedings, and when Watkins had told his story, Charlesworth turned to me and said, "Mr. Tonkin, I think this is just a case of an unfortunate misunderstanding," and wanted to let it go at that. I told him I was extremely disappointed, that that was not my view of the case, and that I would like to take the matter higher.

Accordingly, a meeting was arranged with the air officer controlling the Western Area, Air Commodore De la Rue. I saw him the next day, and the first thing he said, before I had a chance to tell him what I was there for, was that he had discussed the matter with Group-Captain Charlesworth, and was satisfied that it was a case of an unfortunate misunderstanding. That was the position when I had to commence to prove the case. After some considerable pressure on my part, Air Commodore De la Rue agreed to hold an inquiry, because I told him this was a matter that affected the efficiency of the whole Force. In course of time I received the Air Commodore's first report, which I shall read to the House. It is as follows:—

Royal Australian Air Force,
Headquarters, Western Area,
A.N.A. House, Perth,
1st April, 1942.

Dear Sir,—In relation to the matter upon which you interviewed me, I desire to inform you that I have made inquiries, with the following results:—(a) Corroborated evidence has been obtained that Mr. Watkins was not asked to leave his employment at General

Motors. His doing so, therefore, must be due to a misunderstanding on his own part.

(b) The blue-prints were given Mr. Watkins by Flight-Lieut. Bronder and the castings were in Flight-Lieut. Bronder's office but were not called for by Mr. Watkins.

(c) That Flight-Lieut. Bronder was in his office on the day Mr. Watkins said he called, but that there was no inquiry for him. I ascertained that he did call, however, but that it was 12.45 p.m. and not 10 a.m., as he has stated.

2. I have also made general investigations into the general scheme of using the unoccupied time of lathes, etc., in the possession of private individuals, and find that there are five firms working to 100 per cent of their capacity for us, and appear quite satisfied, while there are 15 further firms working for us to under 100 per cent. of their capacity. These appear equally satisfied with the arrangements. There are also several other firms whose contracts were not acceptable to us. These firms have not been approached during these inquiries, so they may quite easily imagine they have a grievance.

3. Your object in having the arrangements between these civil firms and the Air Force investigated has been carried out, and you are assured that no undue trouble exists between these firms and the Air Force. This inquiry has taken up much valuable time, as a consequence of which other pressing matters have had to be put off. It is suggested, therefore, that the matter be now considered closed.

4. A copy of this letter has been forwarded to the Air Board in Melbourne, with a full explanation, in order that the Hon. the Minister for Air may be apprised of the inquiries.

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd.) H. F. de la Rue,
Air Commodore, Air Officer Commanding Western Area,
Royal Australian Air Force.

I considered that report most puerile, so I replied as follows:—

2nd April, 1942.

Dear Sir,

I thank you for your courtesy in replying to my representations relating to the circumstances under which Mr. Watkins of Fremantle left the defence work upon which he was engaged at the firm of General Motors, Ltd., to undertake work for the Air Force. However, I feel bound to state that it is my conviction that, for some reason, your inquiries have not elicited the truth with regard to the complaints which I made.

In your letter you suggest that "the matter be now considered closed." I would not attempt to take up more of your time against your wishes, but do you realise that there is considerably more involved in my complaints than the question of what actually happened to Mr. Watkins? You apparently believe that Flight-Lieutenant Bronder did not induce Watkins to leave his job. Are you aware that this officer actually had a man "man-powered" from the Navy in which he had enlisted at his trade and which necessitated

special representation to Canberra, so that he could undertake work for the Air Force, and that this action was taken before the man concerned had secured any contracts or even tendered for them? In view of this, is it so unlikely that Watkins's statement is true?

You gave me to understand, during our interview, that it was your idea that information about idle machines be obtained, and that it was in pursuance of your plan that Flight-Lieutenant Bronder came across the workshop of Watkins. It is pertinent to ask what tangible results were obtained in Fremantle.

If contracts were secured by any of the firms approached I should be glad to know of them. On the other hand, if no additional work resulted from the inquiries and contacts made what was the reason? The following workshops were amongst those visited by Flight-Lieutenant Bronder:—

- (1) Atlas Engineering Works, Fremantle, proprietor, Mr. F. Austerberry.
- (2) Mr. N. S. Turnbull, Auto Engineer, 25 Collicie-street, Fremantle.
- (3) McCulloch & Neil, Queen Victoria-street, Fremantle.

Mr. Austerberry of the Atlas Works states that he informed Flight-Lieutenant Bronder that he was too busily occupied to undertake work other than milling, shaping, and planing, but as his machines for that class of work were idle for considerable periods he would be willing to do such work to the limit of his capacity. Flight-Lieutenant Bronder gave him to understand that the Air Force would most certainly avail itself of the milling facilities. Subsequently, Flight-Lieutenant Bronder made a second visit to the works to make sure about the milling. Although it is over two months since the first visit of your officer, Mr. Austerberry has not been asked to do any work for the Air Force.

Mr. Turnbull states that Flight-Lieutenant Bronder called on him and discussed the possibility of his making valve guides. He agreed to do so and Flight-Lieutenant Bronder said, "I shall send you down enough material to keep you going for three months." Nothing was said about tendering nor was Mr. Turnbull advised that he would be required to do anything at all in the way of submitting prices before the material would be sent to him. He has been waiting to make a start on the work which he understood he was to do but has heard nothing further.

(3) Mr. McCulloch, of McCulloch & Neil, states that he was away from his business when Flight-Lieutenant Bronder called and inquired about his idle plant. He has a well-equipped workshop but has heard nothing further from the Air Force concerning the possible utilisation of the production potential.

You state in your letter to me that you have made "general investigations into the general scheme of using the unoccupied time of lathes, etc., in the possession of private individuals," and it would appear that you are well satisfied with what you found. It is clear from your letter that your inquiries

only extended to those firms who are actually doing work for the Air Force. Of what value is such an inquiry when my complaints are in connection with the many idle plants which are not doing work for the Air Force but the proprietors of which are anxious and capable of making their contribution to the production side of the war effort of this nation?

That no attempt has been made, in Fremantle at least, to follow up the original exploratory work undertaken at your direction, indicates a failure on the part of someone to make a genuine attempt to step up the production of aeroplane parts of which there is a serious shortage in this State, and this alone would appear to warrant some explanation.

If you feel disposed to discuss the question further with me, I shall be glad to call on you at your convenience.

Air Commodore de la Rue replied on the 10th April to that letter in this way—

With reference to your letter of the 2nd April, 1942, I have only to say that at the time Watkins left G.M.H. it was quite possible for that firm to have had him "manpowered." This I would imagine they would have done had he been employed on war work. At any rate I am quite satisfied we did not ask him to leave G.M.H. or influence him to do so. This I have corroborated.

2. With regard to paragraph 3 of your letter, the answer is "yes." Certainly Munro was "manpowered" from the Navy, and it is quite true that this was done before contracts had been let or tenders made for work under our general scheme. But before any action had been taken to "manpower" Munro he was actually manufacturing, and had orders to produce the following:—

360 Attachment No. 5A bomb release cables, Safety Plunger No. 28 Mk. I Fuse.

120 Attachment No. 1A for 20 lb. bombs.
108 Bomb steadying brackets for 112 lb. bombs.

60 Clips horseshoe securing.

25 Units fire and safe pneumatic for .303 Browning.

I have sighted his quote for Item 1A received 4th January, 1942, and also a quotation for the manufacture of carburettor parts dated the 11th January, 1942. I do not require any further proof of the foregoing.

3. I desire to inform you that I have discovered that an engineering firm in Fremantle had been looking for work of a defence nature for one year prior to the date upon which our investigations commenced.

4. Your paragraph 5. The Atlas Machine Works were visited twice. Once for the purpose of assessing manufacturing capacity, and on another occasion to discover if millers and shapers could be used for sub-contract work by Munro. This shop is engaged upon marine work and could only intermittently have tools available for us; therefore it was not considered practicable to request quotes when delivery might be held up as other shops were available.

5. Turnbull was visited but his plant was not considered of any advantage to R.A.A.F. and his name was not included in the list sent forward to Director of Production. Valve guides and other jobs were discussed there. Mr. Harvey can confirm this.

6. McCulloch & Neil were visited, but their shop is not equipped with sufficient tools to warrant further investigation. You must allow my experts to know just what shops can do the type of work we want. If you wish to have them employed upon defence work, I suggest you take the matter up with the Munitions Department which has a far greater scope of manufacture than we have with far easier tolerance than our precision work.

7. Once again I feel that exhaustive inquiries have been made, and once again I wish to state that I am satisfied my staff are working hard to obtain the service we require. They and I are now far too busy with new developments which cannot be interrupted with further inquiries into this matter. I have no wish to be rude to you, Mr. Tonkin, but I do feel that this matter can now be considered closed.

I was not the one to consider the subject closed even though the Air Commodore so much desired it. But having gone through all the available channels here, and feeling that this case was watertight, I sent the particulars to the Prime Minister who graciously acknowledged my letter and told me he had passed it on to the Minister for Air, and promised to have exhaustive inquiries made. These exhaustive inquiries have apparently been made, but when they were being made I was not informed. The man who came here to make the inquiries did so without my knowledge, and returned to the East. I subsequently received this report dated at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne, the 9th July, 1942, which was sent by the Minister for Air to the Prime Minister. It was sent from the Prime Minister to me with his compliments—

My Dear Prime Minister: With reference to the attached papers, relative to complaints lodged by Mr. J. Watkins, of 23 Stirling-highway, North Fremantle, concerning his transactions with the Royal Australian Air Force authorities in Western Australia, I arranged for those matters to be fully and independently investigated by the Air Member for Personnel (Air Vice-Marshal Wrigley) during his recent visit to Perth.

Air Vice-Marshal Wrigley's report as to the results of those investigations has now been received by me, it reading as follows:—

The circumstances surrounding the making of certain complaints by Mr. J. Watkins, concerning his transactions with R.A.A.F. authorities, were carefully investigated in Western Australia.

Ft.Lt. G. A. Brouder was appointed acting Area Technical Officer for Western Area in January, 1942. Under instructions from

D.G.S.P., he proceeded immediately to make a preliminary survey of local production capacity in the area.

In the course of this survey many machine shops, manufacturing firms and garages were visited and, in a number of cases, samples of work and blue-prints were shown.

Mr. Watkins was, until December, 1941, the proprietor of a small garage and engineering business at Fremantle. He was forced by a lack of materials to close this business, and on 23rd December, 1941, obtained a position as a fitter with General Motors Holden, Ltd.

Watkins was admittedly at all times anxious to get back into his own business, but with some war contract, to overcome the shortage of material difficulty. About the 1st January, 1942, he received a call-up from Army to report for medical examination. As he had no desire to enter Army service, this made him all the more anxious to recommence his own business.

In the course of Bronder's first preliminary survey he did visit Watkins at General Motors' factory on the 6th January, 1942. There is considerable conflicting evidence as to the precise course taken by the conversation, and after this length of time it is impossible to settle the conflict with certainty. It is, however, clear that Watkins was invited to tender for machine work for the R.A.A.F. and informed that there would be a considerable volume of work for successful tenderers. The circumstantial evidence makes inference equally irresistible that no binding agreement was made between Bronder and Watkins. Bronder was in the course of a preliminary survey only. Watkins was admittedly not informed of any particular work that was required and did not and of course was not in a position to make a quote. In these circumstances it is preposterous to imagine that Watkins was offered and accepted binding employment.

As a witness, Watkins was vague, indefinite and unsatisfactory. A coherent account of events was extracted from him only with greatest difficulty and, if interrupted in the course of his evidence, he would tend to recommence at a common starting point, thereby strongly creating the impression of a story carefully constructed beforehand and committed to memory.

On the 7th January, 1942, Watkins called at Bronder's office, and, for the first time, was advised by Bronder of the particular type of work available. He was given a full set of blue-prints covering the bearings in question. On the 9th January, 1942, he called again at Bronder's office and returned the blue-prints stating that he was unaccustomed to working from prints and asking Bronder's advice thereon. He was given a full set of samples of the bearings and advised that some bronze blanks would be cast which he could machine into the finished article. These blanks were, in fact, made and set aside in Bronder's office awaiting a call from Watkins to pick them up.

Watkins did not again call at Bronder's office after the 9th January, 1942; in fact, nothing more was heard of or from him until Mr. Tonkin, M.L.A., rang Bronder about 11 weeks later. If Watkins genuinely believed that he had a definite promise of work on the 6th January, 1942, and that he had been improperly misled into giving up his employment with General Motors, it is impossible to imagine that he would have allowed 11 weeks to elapse in idleness without taking some action. It is also of great significance that when he reported to the Army authorities on the 8th January, 1942, pursuant to his call-up notice, he stated that he was engaged upon munitions work at General Motors. His call-up by the Army was deferred, pending investigation of that statement. If the fact was, as he now states, that he had been induced to terminate his employment with General Motors on the 6th January, 1942, and had taken up work for the R.A.A.F. as from the 7th January, his statement to the Army on the 8th becomes incomprehensible.

Despite the length of time that has elapsed, with the attendant difficulties of obtaining conclusive evidence, there is no doubt that Mr. Watkins, for certain personal reasons, was extremely anxious to get back into business on his own account. There is also no doubt that at the time in question Bronder was making a preliminary survey of production in the area only and seeking contracts and quotes. The only reasonable inference to be drawn from these two main facts, and from the other surrounding circumstances, is that Watkins when approached seized the opportunity of getting back into business on his own account and left General Motors voluntarily and of his own accord, to get things going, find out precisely what type of work was offering and take the necessary preliminary action. Quite obviously he was neither coerced into leaving his existing employment nor induced to leave by false promises on Bronder's part of immediate contracts with the R.A.A.F. It was also ascertained that his job at General Motors remained open for him continuously from the 7th January, 1942, onwards, and, in these circumstances, it is ridiculous for him to suggest that he was caused pecuniary loss by his negotiations with Bronder whatever form those negotiations may have taken.

That report is concurred in by the business member (Mr. W. Sydney Jones), who accompanied the Air Member for Personnel.

I feel that, in the circumstances, any further investigation would not reveal material additional evidence which would result in an altered conclusion being reached.

Yours sincerely,

ARTHUR S. DRAKEFORD.

I went through all the ordinary channels—to the Group Captain, to the Air Commodore, to the Prime Minister and to the Minister for the Air who had an inquiry made, and now I am back where I started. It only

remains for me now to tell the public at large what is indeed a scandal, and I feel that I can prove it absolutely. Before I proceed with the proof I wish to deal with one or two reports to show how foolish and puerile they are. Members will recall that I read from the Air Commodore's report a statement that he had received corroborative evidence that Watkins had not been asked to leave his employment. Yet, when the inquiry was held, the Air Vice-Marshal did not find corroborative evidence; he said there was considerable conflict of opinion and could not decide the matter with certainty. I can decide the matter with certainty because I have corroborative evidence. It is clear that the Air Force officer and the State inspector of machinery saw the workshop of Watkins when he was not present. They must have been satisfied that the machinery could do the work they wanted; otherwise they would not have made a journey of four miles to find Watkins, who was working at General Motors-Holdens, Ltd.

Mr. Hughes: You do not know them.

Mr. TONKIN: Having found Watkins, four persons were present at the interview, the State inspector of machinery, Flight-Lieut. Bronder, and Mr. Caporn, maintenance engineer, General Motors. I have signed statements from three of them which say that Watkins was induced to leave his job with General Motors. Yet the Air Commodore told me he had corroborative evidence that Watkins was not induced to leave his job and the Air Vice-Marshal said there was too much conflict of opinion for him to make up his mind. It will not be necessary to read Watkins's statement. The next statement reads—

Office of the Chief Inspector of Machinery,
Mines Department, Perth.
17th April, 1942.

Mr. Tonkin, M.L.A.,
Parliament House,
Perth.

Dear Sir,—

I am a Government inspector of machinery, and in accordance with your wish, I hereby make this statement as follows:—

On 6th January, 1942, I made a survey of machinery in the Fremantle district, in company with Flight-Lieut. Bronder of the R.A.A.F. with a view to ascertaining what machinery was available to do work which was urgently required by the R.A.A.F.

In the course of the survey we visited one, J. Watkins, employed at General Motors.

The object of our visit was explained to Mr. Watkins and both samples and blue-prints of the work required were also shown him, as

was the case with all other persons interviewed during the day.

Mr. Watkins indicated that he could and would do this work.

Flight-Lieut. Bronder said that there was plenty of work to do and that many hundreds of parts as per samples shown were required.

He said he would get material and blue-prints right away for Mr. Watkins, so that Mr. Watkins could make his jigs and set up his machines, etc.

He also indicated that, if it was necessary, he would arrange for Mr. Watkins's release from General Motors so that he could proceed with the work without undue delay.

From the conversation I heard between Flight-Lieut. Bronder and Mr. Watkins, there was no misunderstanding of the fact that Mr. Watkins was to leave General Motors and proceed without delay to get his own workshop into production for the R.A.A.F.

That is one of the four statements. Here is another of the four, from Mr. J. Caporn, maintenance engineer of General Motors-Holden's Limited, Perth branch, dated the 15th April, 1942:—

Some considerable time ago the R.A.A.F. had an interview with Mr. J. Watkins regarding a contract for machine parts. Mr. Watkins was at this time employed by General Motors-Holden's Limited.

When we released Mr. Watkins, we were under the impression that he was to go to the R.A.A.F. office and obtain plans to make jigs, and submit sample of work. It was understood that if Mr. Watkins did not adhere to same his lathe and other machines would be taken for the use of the R.A.A.F.

Mr. Watkins is a first-class tradesman and we are sure he would do an excellent job.

Now only the Air Force officer remains. He, of course, would stick hard and fast to the assertion that he did not induce the man to leave his employment with General Motors. That is the only thing worthy of note in the Commodore's first report. I now turn to the Commodore's report of the 10th April:—

With reference to your letter of 2nd April, 1942, I have only to say that at the time Watkins left G.M.H. it was quite possible for that firm to have had him manpowered.

As a matter of fact, it was not so; for this occurred on the 6th January and the regulations giving authority to manpower did not come into existence before the 17th February. So the Air Commodore did not know what he was talking about. The physical fact was that the workman was being employed on war work. To ascertain that, it was only necessary to go into the factory and see him at his job. He was engaged in making boats for pontoon bridges, for which General Motors held a contract at the time.

He was actively engaged at that work when the R.A.A.F. officer interviewed him. Yet the Air Force endeavours to prove that he was not engaged on war work.

Next with regard to McCulloch and Neil. Investigation showed that the firm's workshop was far bigger and far better equipped than was Watkins's shop. The air officer saw both workshops; and, having seen Watkins's shop, the smaller of the two, thought it worth while to travel four miles in order to put that shop into production. I now quote from an inventory of the plant in the firm's workshop—

In response to your enquiry regarding our plant at the time we were visited by an official of the R.A.A.F. The machines installed were as follows:—

- 1 only 10in. heavy duty lathe.
- 1 only 8in. 2in. hollow spindle lathe.
- 1 only power hack saw.
- 1 only large power emery grinder.
- 1 only small power emery grinder.
- 1 only power drilling machine.
- 1 only 28-ton press.
- 1 only Repeo cylinder boring machine.

That is a workshop considerably larger than many of the shops employed on Air Force work. Yet the Air Commodore says there was not sufficient machinery in that workshop to interest the R.A.A.F. Now let us have a look at Air Vice-Marshal Wrigley's report. I have already quoted that report once. It states that as Watkins had no desire to enter Army service, he was all the more anxious to recommence in his own business. But Watkins was in his own business before he went to General Motors, and was there voluntarily. If he had wanted not to enter Army service he was as safe as he could be at General Motors; being a qualified fitter engaged in war work he was not liable to be called up. Yet the Air Vice-Marshal suggests that Watkins was anxious to leave that protected haven in order to get back to his own shop and dodge military service. That is utter nonsense.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: It is utterly unfair.

Mr. TONKIN: Yes, and nonsense as well. Then the Air Vice-Marshal goes on to say—

Watkins strongly created the impression of having a story carefully constructed beforehand and committed to memory.

What was there to commit to memory? The man did not have to "remember" that he closed his own shop and went to General Motors; nor was it necessary for him to make up, and commit to memory, a story

that he left General Motors. Some men have not the capacity to explain themselves quickly and readily, and especially do we find that to be the case among very practical workmen. Whilst they are excellent workmen, they cannot make speeches. Because Watkins had some difficulty, after the lapse of months, in remembering the exact sequence of events, there is no right to suggest that his story was committed to memory. For the Air Vice-Marshal to suggest such a thing proves his unfitness for the job he undertook.

Mr. Triat: Hear, hear!

Mr. TONKIN: Air Vice-Marshal Wrigley reported that Watkins was given a full set of samples of bearings and advised that some bronze blanks would be cast which he could machine into the finished article; and that these blanks were, in fact, made and set aside in Bronder's office awaiting a call from Watkins to pick them up. I give that an emphatic denial. I shall prove that the castings were not available, and have conclusive evidence, which I shall submit later, on the point. Further on in the Air Vice-Marshal's report, the following appears:—

The only reasonable inference to be drawn from these two main facts and from the surrounding circumstances is that Watkins, when approached, seized the opportunity of getting back into business on his own account and left General Motors voluntarily, and of his own accord, to get things going, find out precisely what type of work was offering and take the necessary preliminary action.

If this were true, would not Watkins, having returned to his business (which he left voluntarily) have shown considerable energy in endeavouring to get into production? Yet we are asked to believe it was his own fault that he did not obtain the castings upon which he was to work. It is not of much use to deal further with these reports, because they are worthless. The only issues in this case are, firstly, did Watkins voluntarily leave his job at General Motors, or was he induced, as a result of a promise of work or threats, to leave that job; and, secondly, having left the job, was his failure to get into production his own fault, the fault of the Air Force, or the fault of both? I leave it to the commonsense of members to decide this when I have given the facts. It is not disputed that Watkins left General Motors, and I have given three statements from men present setting out the circumstances under which he did so. Having left General Motors, he kept his appointment and

obtained the blueprints. He then set to work to make the jigs.

Members should look carefully at the jig I have here. It is rather an intricate piece of work. The intricacy lies in the angles at which the job has to be made. I have here other portions of the jigs; these are the preliminary tools necessary before production can be started. All these tools must be made before actual production is commenced. I have these dies, as they are termed by my practical friend, the member for Middle Swan, and also a pattern of the finished article. The dies are used to make certain that the holes are drilled in the correct position. Watkins made these jigs; they took him three days to make. The jigs, with the material and labour, are worth between £7 and £8. I ask members whether it is reasonable to suppose that a man would go to the trouble of making jigs to blueprints, and then would take no further steps to obtain the material necessary to do the work. He receives no payment whatever for making the jigs; they are made at his own expense. I for one cannot believe that he would not take steps to obtain the material, and I know he did do so. The Air Force said that the castings were in the office all the time, and that if Watkins had wanted them he could have got them and started the work.

I made up my mind to prove this case. All the time these inquiries were being made, I also made some. I discovered that three other people had been asked to make the same thing and that two of them had been left in exactly the same position as Watkins. They made the jigs and did not hear anything more. Strangely enough, the contract was given to a man who did not make the jigs; one of the men who had made the jigs passed them on to him. Taking it in its simplest aspect, only about 100 of these flat bearings were needed for Avro-Anson planes, which are now things of the past. In order to secure 100 of them, the Air Force caused three workmen to spend three days making useless jigs, as they cannot now be used for anything else. Because of the muddling and inefficiency of the Air Force, those three men were put to that unnecessary labour and expense.

Yesterday I was speaking to the former employer of the man who got the contract. Having heard from the man that he was going to make flat bearings he told him that

as he had already made the necessary jigs for the job, which apparently he was not to do, he would readily pass them on to him. The astonishing thing is that the only man who did not go to the trouble of making jigs got the contract. What a waste of manpower! We are supposed to be asking men to work overtime; we are supposed to be short of material; and yet, as a result of incompetence in the Air Force, three men have wasted their time and material making unnecessary machine tools. The responsibility definitely attaches, I say deliberately, to the muddlers in the Air Force. When I endeavoured to prove there was something radically wrong, we had inquiry after inquiry and finally got this puerile stuff from which I have quoted, in which it is said that there is nothing wrong, that the man only wanted to dodge military service.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The authorities had to say something.

Mr. TONKIN: If any member is not satisfied that Watkins got a raw deal, I would like to hear from him, because I have additional proof to submit, if necessary. I do not desire, however, to spend all day on that one subject. There is not the slightest doubt that Watkins was deluded into leaving his job and dumped by the Air Force because of its muddling. I should like to add that, if Air Vice-Marshal Wrigley can do no better than he did in holding this inquiry, in my view he is a highly paid officer who is not worth his salary. He was called upon by the Minister for Air to investigate a case that was as clear as daylight. He could not find the truth, so of what use is he to the country? He is of no value at all, nor is his comrade, the member of the Air personnel. I ask the Minister for Air whether these men are worthy of their places in the scheme of things in Australia.

I now proceed to more alarming matters. We have a number of incompetent men engaged as inspectors in the Air Force and in the Munitions Department. Because of their incompetence, they are causing waste of time and material. I invite members to look at a small article I have here; it is a brass bush for a carburetter. It is hollow and cylindrical. This brass bush was rejected by the Aeronautical Inspection Directorate. It is rejected because it is three-tenths of a thousandth of an inch out. It is slightly oval. I venture to say that no practical man, having

regard to the use to which this is to be put, and our state of unpreparedness, would reject this. Only an unpractical man would do so. This bush has to be pushed into a steel casting and, when it has been pushed in it has to be reamed in. The member for Middle Swan will know what that means. An engineer tells me that in a bush of this size an ovality of three-tenths of a thousandth of an inch would not amount to anything because immediately it was forced into the casting that ovality would almost certainly be removed, but if it were not it would be when it was reamed in. In the rejection of these parts £20 worth of material and labour have been wasted. The defect here is not the fault of the workman concerned but of the material.

Here is a portion of a phosphor-bronze rod which broke like a carrot when it fell on the floor. It is from that material that this bush is made. It has been explained to me by an engineer that all castings have a hard skin on the outside. When the first machining takes place, that hard skin being removed, the metal inside proceeds to move and the metal takes on a different shape. So this article could be dead true in the lathe but, after having been made, because the outer skin has been taken off, there could easily be a movement of three-tenths of a thousandth of an inch. When members realise that the human hair averages from about 5000th to 7000th of an inch in thickness and this is three-tenths of one thousandth of an inch out, the very slight ovality of this part can be imagined! Yet £20 worth of work was rejected, I am told—and I believe it—because the inspector was not a practical man.

We find the same thing in connection with a number of other articles of that type. On one occasion the Area Technical Officer rang up a workman in Fremantle and told him he urgently needed some jets. He supplied particulars and asked that the jets should be made without delay. The workman made the jets and took them up in his vest pocket. The inspection officer told him he had no right to take them out of his workshop, that they had to be inspected in the workshop. That workman said he had no idea an inspector would travel from Perth to Fremantle to inspect a small job like that, to which the officer replied, "My dear fellow, we would go to Fremantle to inspect a split pin!" This was a job that was urgently

needed for planes that were then on the ground. I could give members a dozen or more examples of the same thing.

I saw a man making bomb-release brackets, the design of which makes it possible to move the metal in the fingers. They are not of rigid design. When the inspector went down, although the work was half done, he told the workman he would not pass it because the brackets were not made to a drawing. The man said, "I was asked to make this from a pattern, as I have often done." The officer replied, "I cannot help that. You have no drawing and therefore do not know the tolerance." I am told that it is the height of absurdity to talk about tolerance in connection with an article which can be turned in the fingers. It is reasonable to talk about tolerance in a rigid article and to give a variation of a half-thousandth, but to talk about tolerance in something that can be twisted in the fingers is utter absurdity. So the job that was half done at the request of one of the A.I.D. inspectors must now be left in the workshop as so much wasted effort.

I mentioned that three men were asked to make these flat bearings. One of them was the man who was manpowered out of the Navy. He is a very fine type of fellow who offered his services to the Munitions Department just after war broke out. He felt that he had considerable skill which the average man did not possess, and that he should offer it to the country. He wrote to the Ministry of Munitions and offered to work for it without profit, at cost only—not cost plus, but just cost. This is the reply he received—

The Manager,

Messrs. Donald Munro & Co.,
Box E230, G.P.O., Perth.

Dear Sir,—I have to thank you for your offer to manufacture various requirements for this department on a cost basis only and to inform you same has been forwarded to the appropriate branch for consideration.

That was on the 5th June, 1940. He has never heard any more about the matter from that day to this. He endeavoured to obtain work from the Ministry of Munitions but was not successful, and so decided to join the Navy at his trade. He served his articles on the Clyde, apprenticed to Donald Carlow and Sons. In the last war he used his skill as a precision toolmaker. He is a highly skilled, well-qualified tradesman, but could not obtain war contracts, and so he

closed down his shop and joined the Navy and was waiting to be called up. While he was so waiting he was introduced to Flight Lieut. Bronder. The latter said, "You are altogether too good a man to go into the Navy. The Air Force has plenty of work you should be doing. I will get you out of the Navy."

It is extremely difficult to get a man out of the services once he enlists in his trade. It is difficult in ordinary circumstances, but if a man enlists in the services in his trade it is almost impossible to release him. However, the Air Force in this State made special representations to Canberra and succeeded in having Munro released from the Navy. So he started to work for the Air Force. A few days after he began he was asked to make these flat bearings, the same things Watkins was asked to make at the same time. He proceeded immediately to make his jigs. Then he waited for the castings to be sent down. They were not forwarded, however, and he telephoned for them, just as Watkins had done. Still he could not get them. He went further than Watkins did. He went to the Air Force and asked for the castings. He was told that the castings were not to hand.

Because Watkins did not go to Perth I have been told that the castings were there all the time and he could have got them. If Watkins could have got them why not Munro? They were not there! Munro returned to his shop and kept telephoning over a period of weeks, because he had taken a lot of trouble over his jigs and was anxious to do the work. He was finally told that the castings were there. When he called for them, instead of giving him the castings they gave him another job and asked him to make some fire and safe and sear-release mechanism. He wasted all that time and labour, and proceeded with this other job. The job was worth £50, and although the Air Force has had it for nearly four months he cannot receive payment. The explanation is that the man concerned in giving this order has now left the Air Force. It does not seem to matter a thing that Flight Lieut. Bronder supplied the drawings for the fire and safe and sear-release mechanism. He knew the job was being done, and was the Area Technical Officer. Because some officer responsible for the job is no longer in the Air Force Munro has waited four months for his £50 and has not got it yet. How

long can small manufacturers stand that treatment? It is playing into the hands of the big manufacturers. It is because that sort of thing is going on that I endeavoured to have inquiries made, and said that Watkins's case was only incidental. I made no progress whatever, and members must know that there is nothing but inefficiency and muddle in the place.

Before I leave the subject of the Air Force I will read two statements made by responsible Ministers in connection with it; and in view of what I have said about the Air Force these words appear to be a mockery. This is the first statement and is dated Canberra the 10th March:—

Divided control had caused many holdups in aircraft production, said the Minister for Aircraft Production (Senator Cameron) today. Remaining hindrances would need quick removal. Since the formation of the Aircraft Advisory Committee, however, many management difficulties had been ironed out.

"Now that Japan has struck, the Government is doubly anxious that the industry be 100 per cent. efficient," said Senator Cameron. "The Japanese are sparing nothing in their fanatical efforts to take Australia, and we must spare nothing to prevent them from carrying out their sinister designs."

That is a very laudable object on the part of the Minister, but what is the Air Force in W.A. doing towards it? Now we have these remarks dated Melbourne the 22nd February, and obviously the Minister does not know where the trouble lies:—

Aircraft Parts: Minister Warns Manufacturers.—If the flow of certain small but extremely important aircraft parts is held up in future by the manufacturers, endangering continuous production, the Minister for Aircraft Production (Senator Cameron) will consider publicly naming those responsible for the delay. Senator Cameron made this announcement on his arrival in Melbourne this morning as the result of information placed before him at a Sydney aircraft factory which he visited before proceeding to Canberra for the secret session of the Federal Parliament.

"I was informed that the non-delivery of specified parts had caused a serious delay at a certain point in production," said the Minister. "The hold-up meant that the output was checked when it should have been continuous. There may be retarding factors beyond the control of the manufacturers, but, if no valid excuse is forthcoming and production hitches are traceable to the same source in future, I will recommend that drastic action be taken to ensure that there will be no more of them. I am reluctant to weigh heavily on industry when it is working at top pressure, but we are embroiled in a war in which defeat would mean bullets for men and enslavement of the worst kind for our womenfolk."

The fault lies with the inspectors and officers responsible for ordering and inspecting the parts. On one occasion the Air Force wanted a special job done, and it got in touch with a man likely to do it. He was asked—would he go on with the job? And he said, "Yes, but there will be difficulty on account of the heat treatment." An instrument called a pyrometer was essential, but there was not one procurable in the State. He suggested that he might use certain fusible alloys to do this job, and the argument about it extended over several weeks. In the meantime he was told by one man in the Air Force to go ahead with the job. He was then told by another man to stop it. A few days later he was again told by the first man to go ahead with the job, and then told by the other man to stop it.

In the meantime the material which had been sent to him had been lying idle. Some of it came from Commonwealth Steel, who wanted payment for the material, so they sent a bill to this manufacturer. He declined to pay it in the circumstances. The material was ordered by the Air Force and they would not let him get on with the job. The people who had supplied the steel sent down a lorry and repossessed it. A waste of petrol and manpower occurred in taking the material down and in taking it away from the job. The other half of the material had been supplied by the Air Force itself. After it had been down there for some weeks the Air Force decided that it ought to be tested and said they would pick it up so that the A.I.D. could inspect it, and it could then be reissued. They sent down and took it away. That is the sort of thing that is going on; but when I asked for a reasonable inquiry into these things, and that there should be some reorganisation, I could make no progress whatever.

We now proceed to the Munitions Department. Members may know that there are such persons as major contractors, who get the big job even though they have not the capacity to carry it out. They sublet it to smaller manufacturers who have to agree to their terms. Such a job was sublet to a firm in Fremantle. The job was to make brackets and plates for rear vision mirrors for motor-cars. The men working on it were particular to see that the only thing which could go wrong did not go wrong. They measured each bracket separately and checked each other's work. They sent the work up to the

major contractor, and received a ring on the telephone to say that 80 per cent. of their work had been rejected. One of the partners said "That is ridiculous. We have taken the utmost care with this work. There must be some mistake." He was told, "No, 80 per cent. has been rejected." This workman then said, "If that is the case you can send your truck down and pick up all the scrap metal because I will not turn another wheel. I am certain that that work was up to standard."

That was the end of the telephone conversation, except that he also said he would get in touch with somebody and make a complaint about it. Within ten minutes he received another ring, and was told that 100 per cent. of his stuff had passed. When he asked the reason for the sudden change, an inspector whose name I could give if necessary—I do not wish to do so now for obvious reasons—said, "The other inspectors who inspected this work were not quite up to the job. They made a mistake." If this manufacturer had not made a noise, he would have been paid for 20 per cent. though his work was 100 per cent. efficient. Subsequently he was complimented upon the excellence of his work and the fact that he had not used his tolerance. I am not making any charges, because I am not in a position to do so, but I am going to suggest possible loopholes. When a major contractor receives work from other contractors, if it is rejected, it goes into bond. The man who makes it does not get it; it remains with the major contractor. It would be easy for somebody from the major contractor's business to reject work which would pass and subsequently deliver it, and receive payment for it. I cannot say that this is actually being done, but it looks mighty like it. That is not the only instance of this kind of thing.

Mr. Wilson: That used to be done with the sleeper-cutting.

Mr. TONKIN: I could recount instances after instance, but I think one example of each is enough.

Members may have read recently that the Minister invited people of an inventive turn of mind to submit inventions or suggestions. Let me show how much encouragement is given people in this State to do that. The Victorian Railway Department is a major contractor for Bren-gun carriers. Its representative, Mr. Cox, came to this State to arrange for the manufacture of a number of

parts. While he was in a certain establishment he said to the manager, "Now that the Japs have cut off our rubber supplies, we are going to be in a difficulty. I suggest that you endeavour to make a bogey wheel with a substitute tyre." The man said he would see what he could do. He got into touch with the Ministry of Munitions and asked permission to see a Bren-gun carrier. He was refused. Another man who wanted to do the same thing asked to see a blueprint and he was refused. Still, his ideas were wanted. However, the first man designed his wheel and delivered the design. Somebody then rang him and said that the wheel made to that design would be unsuitable because the bolts were in the way. He replied that he was not surprised as he had not seen a Bren-gun carrier, but that if he had seen one he would have been able to obviate that difficulty. Then he altered his design and made two wheels on which he countersunk the bolts, and these were sent in to the department. Mr. Cox complimented him upon his interest. A few days later the manufacturer rang up the Ministry of Munitions to ask whether the wheels were satisfactory. The answer was that they were a failure as they had worn flats. He was surprised to hear that, but it is remarkable how things turn out.

A week or two later he was in the Ministry of Munitions to see a certain gentleman. As he walked into the office a telephone conversation was in progress and he could not help hearing what was said. Arrangements were being made for a first trial of those wheels. When the conversation finished the man said, "I suppose you are surprised to hear that." He replied that he was. The man then said, "The truth is we have not tested out the wheels." Members should appreciate that those wheels have not been tested yet. When I was in the office the day before yesterday the man in my presence rang the Ministry of Munitions and asked of a certain official when the test was to be arranged, and he was told it would be some time yet. Yet one of the most highly placed officers in the department had told him that his wheels, which had never been tested, were a failure. And the Minister invites people to make suggestions to the department! I ask members, is it not time we had a tribunal so that we could get a proper inquiry and have everything put right, rather than continue with such departmental inquiries?

How can we win a war when that state of affairs exists?

Hon. P. Collier: We could not win a dog-fight.

Mr. TONKIN: Now I come to something even worse. I have a copy of the "Commonwealth Gazette" dated the 13th March, 1941. It contains two innocent looking items, though for one who knows something about the matter they are not at all innocent—

(3340) Requisition No. 14879.—Sea markers, for Department of Munitions, £23,082 16s. 3d.

Then follows the name of the firm and the State "Western Australia."

(3312) Requisition No. 14880.—Sea markers, for Department of Munitions, £88,928 6s. 5d.—United Metal Industries, Ltd., Queensland.

I know the full story. Sea markers are tin arrangements filled with powdered aluminium. When dropped on the water, they burst and spread the powder over the surface of the water, and thus mark the spot. They are of quite simple construction. When tenders were called, the manager of the Western Australian firm inspected the drawing and said, "On that drawing, I can make those articles at 15s. 7d. each; but if you will permit me to make slight alterations in no way affecting efficiency but cheapening manufacture I can make them for 14s. 7d." He quoted for 100,000 at 15s. 7d. on the departmental drawing and 14s. 7d. on his own. He waited to see the outcome. The department accepted his amended drawing and gave him a contract for 30,000 at 14s. 7d., giving the balance of 70,000 to the Queensland firm at 25s. 5d.—representing a difference of £35,000 on the contract.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Which pattern were the Queensland people making?

Mr. TONKIN: The amended pattern, at 25s. 5d.; and this Western Australian man is making them today—I saw some being made only yesterday—at 14s. 7d., and he states they are paying him quite well. He further stated he had heard whispers that if he had liked to increase his price, obstacles would not be placed in his way. But that was not this man's way of doing business. He said, "I am prepared to make those articles for 14s. 7d." Is not that a matter positively crying out for inquiry? But a departmental inquiry never gets us anywhere.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Did you send those figures to the Federal Ministers?

Mr. TONKIN: I am sick and tired of sending figures to Ministers. The wool is pulled over their eyes. They have experts like Air Vice-Marshal Wrigley. Inquiries are held, but there are no results. They "pass the buck." If these were times of peace, this sort of thing might be allowed to go on; but in war-time we have to do something if we are to justify our existence. There may be a perfectly reasonable explanation, but on the facts it is most difficult to find. There is urgent need for immediate inquiry. This case is typical of dozens and dozens that I know of. What is the use of writing to the departments? I have spent hours typing reiterated statements and sending them on to the departments. I got no further. As a last resource I am making these things public. I suppose the Censor will come down on me, but these matters ought to be known throughout the length and breadth of the Commonwealth.

We are asking the people to pay additional taxation, and yet we throw away £35,000 in one single contract! This man in Western Australia is capable of doing and prepared to do 100,000 of these articles at 14s. 7d., but United Metal Industries in Queensland are receiving 25s. 5d. for the same article. Because we had not the necessary set-up here and therefore might be somewhat dearer than other States, we could not be considered. If these matters are referred to the Prime Minister, he cannot do more than call for reports from his officers. Departmental inquiries, I repeat, are complete wash-outs. I would not waste time on them. They discover nothing. One could not prove to a departmental board of inquiry that the world is round. For effectual investigations we must have a judge, a man with the judicial mind, one knowing the laws of evidence; and we must have experts in the particular branch with regard to which a protest is being made, experts as far removed as possible from the many tie-ups there are. We must endeavour to set up a permanent tribunal to which anyone who feels that he has a grievance or a case for inquiry can go.

I am not by any means advocating that every complaint should be investigated, since undoubtedly there will be some of a frivolous nature. I have here complaints, straight-out statements made to me, of bare-faced bribery. I refrain from giving the details here, but I am prepared to give them to a

tribunal such as I have suggested. We need a tribunal of responsible men to examine allegations and decide whether, *prima facie*, they have sufficient merits to warrant further investigation. If that should be the decision, let us have every inquiry irrespective of anything highly-placed officials may declare. How can a full-time war effort on the part of the people be expected when men in responsible positions give ample evidence of incompetency? Various manufacturers have said to me, "Mr. Tonkin, we think such and such a man is a fifth columnist, for he does nothing but retard us." They mention a name and ask does it not sound like a foreigner's. A man says he knows a number of firms who are perfectly satisfied that the Air Force is a complete wash-out, and the worst of the services. Another man said, "I do not take the Air Force seriously; I would be bankrupt if I did." And he is a man in a big way in Perth. The Minister is having it put over him properly.

So it goes on, and I am as a voice crying in the wilderness. There are hundreds and hundreds of matters crying out for inquiry, but no decent inquiry can we get. I have given members something to think about, and I hope I shall have their co-operation in an endeavour to take a step which will remove some of these abuses and thus make it easier than it is at present for us to carry on the terrible struggle.

Members: Hear, hear!

On motion by Mr. Seward, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 4.13 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 12th August, 1942.

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

QUESTIONS (2).

MINING, NORTHAMPTON COPPER ORE.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL asked the Chief Secretary: Has the Government been advised of any action taken, or proposed to be taken,