

which regard themselves as too frequently neglected through the concentration of expenditure in those centres where population is greater.

Hon. A. Thomson: And to prevent the Commonwealth Government going back on its word.

Hon. H. SEDDON: And to restore the ideal of federation under which the Constitution was drawn up in its original conception. I have pleasure in supporting the Bill. I have made these remarks because I think the time has arrived when topics of this description should become matters of public concern in the best interests of the citizens of Australia.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee, etc.*

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Bill read a third time and *passed*.

*House adjourned at 6.4 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

*Wednesday, 31st July, 1946.*

	Page
Questions: Rural Relief Fund Act, as to repayment of advances	53
New Zealand rail cars, as to suggested use in Western Australia	53
Australian Egg Board, as to representation and surplus funds	54
School bus services, as to concession to local authorities	54
Geological and geophysical surveys, as to exploration of mineral resources	54
Oil, as to Warren River and South coast search	55
Address-in-reply, third day	55
Committees for the Session, Council's message	55

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

## QUESTIONS.

### RURAL RELIEF FUND ACT.

*As to Repayment of Advances.*

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Lands:

1, Has the Government concluded the consideration it stated it was giving last year to what action it intended to take regarding the repayment of moneys advanced to farmers under the Rural Relief Fund Act?

2, If so, can he state what the decision is?

The MINISTER replied:

1, and 2, The State Government has reached conclusions as to action desirable regarding repayment of moneys advanced to farmers under the Rural Relief Fund Act.

The legal position was examined as to what action would be required to cancel the mortgages and whether Commonwealth approval or legislation would be required to refund the payments made to farmers.

Before the Fund can be disposed of, there must be Commonwealth Parliamentary authority for such proposal, because without the authority of Commonwealth legislation, if the State releases recoverable debts or disburses the money in hand, the Commonwealth will be in the position to compel repayment.

Our case has been stated, therefore, to the Commonwealth Government, requesting that it introduces the appropriate legislation and asking that it finds no objection to the State Government also introducing the required legislation.

### NEW ZEALAND RAIL CARS.

*As to Suggested Use in Western Australia.*

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Railways:

1, Was the Commissioner of Railways given in 1937 or 1938 photos., blueprints, and detailed information regarding rail cars in use in New Zealand, which rail cars would enable the journey from Perth to Kalgoorlie to be done in 8 to 9 hours?

2, If so, has he made any further inquiries regarding these cars, and if so with what result?

3, Does he consider the cars unsuitable for use in this State, and if so for what reasons?

4, If not unsuitable, has he taken any measures to secure this type of rail car for this State, and if so, with what result?

The MINISTER replied:

1, Yes. To run from Perth to Kalgoorlie in 9 hours would necessitate an average overall speed of 42 miles per hour. The maximum speed permitted is 45 miles per hour and the proposal is therefore not feasible.

2, No.

3, Yes. Capacity is too small. The cars seat 52 passengers but have neither lavatory nor luggage compartment. The Western Australian Diesel-electric rail car seats 40, with two lavatories and luggage compartment, and the trailer seats 36, with two lavatories and luggage compartment, making a total accommodation for 76 passengers.

4, Answered by No. 3. The rail cars now on order are more powerful and more commodious, and will meet the needs of this State much better than the New Zealand cars.

### AUSTRALIAN EGG BOARD.

*As to Representation and Surplus Funds.*

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Agriculture:

1, Is the Under Secretary for Agriculture a member of the Australian Egg Board?

2, If so, what interests does he represent on that board, and how was he appointed?

3, Is it a fact that the Australian Egg Board has surplus funds to the extent of approximately £500,000?

4, Can he inform the House how that sum of money was obtained by the board?

5, Is it a fact that the Federal Minister for Commerce has stated that those surplus funds are not to be distributed amongst those who delivered eggs to the Australian Egg Board?

The MINISTER replied:

1, and 2, There is not an Australian Egg Board.

3 and 4, The Controller of Egg Supplies, acting under authority from National Security (Egg Control) Regulations, 1943, is responsible for the purchase, treatment, and marketing of eggs at prices determined by the Prices Commissioner, and these operations have resulted in the accumulation of surplus funds.

Annual balance sheets published by the Controller of Egg Supplies reveal that for the year ending 1943-44 a surplus of revenue over expenditure amounted to £215,888; in 1944-45 the annual surplus was £150,218. The revenue and expenditure statement for the year ending the 30th June, 1946, has not been published yet by the Controller of Egg Supplies and is not yet available.

These surpluses are not necessarily represented as cash reserves, but represent certain assets and stocks of eggs and egg products, the value of which will depend upon the amount realised upon their sale.

5, I am not aware that the Minister for Commerce and Agriculture has made any determination concerning the distribution of surpluses which may result from the administration of the National Security (Egg Industry) Regulations.

### SCHOOL BUS SERVICES.

*As to Concession to Local Authorities.*

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Education:

1, Is it a fact that the Education Department allows a local authority 3d. per mile more than a private contractor in school bus contracts?

2, If so why is this concession granted to local authorities?

The MINISTER replied:

1, No.

2, Answered by 1.

### GEOLOGICAL AND GEOPHYSICAL SURVEYS.

*As to Exploration of Mineral Resources.*

Mr. HOAR asked the Minister for Mines:

1, What will be the functions of the Commonwealth Geological and Geophysical Survey Department in Western Australia

2, Will this work be independent of this State's geological surveys or will a close co-operation exist?

3, Will this State be expected to share in the cost of the work done by the Commonwealth; if so, what is the agreement?

4, What is the present strength of staff in this State's Geological Survey Department?

5, Is this number considered sufficient to undertake a detailed mineral exploration in a State of this size?

6, Have the potential mineral resources of the South-West ever been systematically investigated and mapped out in detail; if not, what are the Government's plans in this regard?

The MINISTER replied:

1, The Commonwealth Geological and Geophysical Bureau has no official function in Western Australia. It is entirely a Commonwealth Government institution. At the request of the State Government, it is at present making a geophysical examination of the Collie Coalfield, at the same time as our State Geological Survey is conducting a geological survey.

2, The Commonwealth Bureau is prepared to assist the States in specialised ways, such as by aerial and geophysical surveys and to collaborate in certain geological examinations, such as the joint oil geological survey which has been arranged by both Governments in the Kimberley District.

3, The State bears only the cost of its own officers and their expenses.

4, Eight technical officers.

5, Any number of geologists could be usefully absorbed in a State this size. The present staff, however, is doing excellent and expeditious work.

6, Mineral occurrences of potential economic value, such as at Greenbushes, Collie and Bridgetown, in the South-West, have been examined as reported from time to time. A complete survey of Collie is now being made, to be followed by one at Wilga. In the case of urgent demand for a mineral known to occur in the South-West, detailed examination would be made immediately.

## OIL.

### *As to Warren River and South Coast Search.*

Mr. HOAR asked the Minister for Mines:

1, Has the Government any knowledge of an early search for oil in the vicinity of the mouth of the Warren River? If so,—

(a) What was the nature of the work done there?

(b) The depth of borings, if any?

(c) Would the results justify a feeling of optimism that oil existed in that area in sufficient quantities to warrant further exploratory work being done?

2, Has any area of land near the south coast and west of Albany been leased to any oil company as a prospecting area?

The MINISTER replied:

1, Yes.

(a) A full report appears, pages 7 to 39 of Geological Survey Bulletin No. 65.

(b) Three bores were sunk, the deepest 1719 feet.

(c) No—see pages 38 to 39 of such report.

2, No title is held at present. One was granted to Phoenix Oil Extractors Limited on the 18th November, 1940 and expired on the 17th November, 1942.

## ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

### *Third Day.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

**MR. NEEDHAM** (Perth) [4.38]: I desire to congratulate the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe on the very effective and thoughtful speech in which he moved the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply. He was very eloquent in addressing the House. I also desire to associate myself with his kindly reference to the sad bereavement sustained by His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor, Sir James Mitchell, in the death of his daughter. I endorse his statement in regard to the very dignified manner in which His Excellency has carried out the duties of his exalted position, and express the hope, which I know is shared by all, that he will long be spared to grace the very high office he now holds.

In moving the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply to the Lieutenant-Governor's Speech, the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe referred to the aftermath of the war. We are undoubtedly going through that stage, together with the rest of the world, and today I believe the eyes of the whole world are focussed upon the meeting in Paris, where representatives of 20 odd nations are gathered in an endeavour to lay down the foundations of what we all hope will be a lasting peace, one that will remove for ever from the hearts of the people the fear of the atrocities of war. Personally, I feel somewhat uneasy about it because of events since the cessation of hostilities on the 15th August last. Those events have not altogether suggested that we shall be able to lay the foundations of the lasting peace that is so much desired, judging by what has transpired at meetings under the auspices of the United Nations Organisation.

Those meetings have been characterised by dissensions, suspicions and distrust, and the results attained have not been such as to indicate that the conference now assembled will be successful in achieving the desired end. We can only hope to secure from the efforts of those men who are gathered together at the conference the foundations of a lasting peace if Christian principles are observed. Unless those principles are observed in their deliberations and decisions, then inevitably the fear of war will not be removed from the world, and mothers will continue to bear and raise children that eventually can serve as nothing more nor less than cannon fodder. In these circumstances, I venture to assert that in the hearts of everyone the world over today there is great anxiety, and all are watching the proceedings with a fervent hope that the results of the deliberations will be to usher in a real new order under which the brotherhood of man will be an accomplished fact.

Mr. Mann: That will never be.

Mr. NEEDHAM: During the 12 months since the Japanese collapse, we have been experiencing an uneasy peace. There has not been unity among the Allies such as characterised them during the period of war, and, as I have already indicated, the meetings of the Big Four have not been altogether happy. One of the participants in

those meetings has taken a very decided stand, one in no way conducive to a successful conclusion to their deliberations. I refer to the attitude of Russia's representatives. Their conduct at meetings of the Big Four and of the United Nations Organisation has been at complete variance from the attitude adopted during the troublous years of fighting, and one wonders why such an attitude has now been adopted and what the representatives of Russia are aiming at. The valour of the Russian troops and people during the world-wide struggle won the admiration of everybody, and it is hard to realise that, having gone through the turmoil of war and having exhibited such a great measure of heroism, bravery and fortitude, the Russians, through their representatives, are now adopting an entirely different attitude when the nations are endeavouring to arrange the peace. The proceedings at these various conferences have been anything but encouraging.

The problems handled by the United Nations are very serious, and amongst them is that of the advent of the atomic bomb. How that very important question is to be dealt with we do not know, but America's offer to endeavour to secure some control over the atomic bomb is certainly generous. There again we find the Russians in opposition. The development of the atomic bomb and its achievements bring to my mind an incident in the Commonwealth Parliament House during the course of the 1914-19 war. In the Queen's Hall an exhibition was arranged displaying a number of weapons that were used by the aborigines of Australia and, at the same time, a number of shells used during the current war were also shown. I pointed out to some friends of mine who were looking at the exhibit that it disclosed the kind of progress our alleged civilisation had made, and remarked on the difference between the weapons used by the aborigines when they fought hand to hand and the shells propelled from huge guns in order to kill people at a distance.

Now we have a further development in the form of the atomic bomb, which is capable of killing more people at an even greater distance. That shows how we are advancing in the manufacture of weapons of destruction. A strong effort is being made to control the ills that the atomic bomb has created, and here again we find the Russian representatives anything but helpful. I re-

assert that the American offer for the control of the atom bomb was a magnificent gesture; and it was hoped—in fact, asserted—that the totalitarian doctrine of the Russian and other Governments had been abandoned. When Japan collapsed and hostilities ceased, it was fondly thought that we had seen the end of the Fascist regime; but I very much regret that there are still some remnants of it in existence. Every effort will have to be made to see that it does not arise again and become an effective force. Unless the atomic bomb is controlled by an international committee I am very much afraid we shall have another race of armaments in the manufacture of this destructive weapon. We may see slogans among the nations, “Bigger and better bombs.” When we think of the destructive power contained in that bomb we must realise the danger we are facing. The bombs that dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki will be as nothing compared with the destructive force of the atomic bomb that will eventually be manufactured. We can visualise what would happen in the British Isles if one such bomb, in its developed state, were dropped there. I contend that international control is necessary; and when it is set up it should be empowered to control the atomic bomb and develop atomic energy in the ways of peace rather than in the ways of force.

I think it right at this stage to refer to the splendid work done by Dr. Evatt with regard to the establishment of an international committee to control atomic energy and, in fact, to his work generally as a representative of Australia at the various meetings held under the auspices of the United Nations Organisation. I think the right hon. gentleman has done and is doing a very fine job not only for Australia but for the world. I regretted to notice in a section of the Sydney Press a while ago a very contemptuous reference to Dr. Evatt. It said that Dr. Evatt on one of his rare visits to Australia had said so-and-so and had done so-and-so. When one considers that he has been out of Australia working on behalf of the people of Australia and when one also considers the good work he is doing, I think a reference of that kind contemptible.

Now we come to the question of rehabilitation. Rehabilitation is, of course, a most

important part of Government responsibility and that responsibility rests entirely with the Commonwealth Government. Just as that Government was responsible for the mobilisation of the Fighting Forces of the nation, so is it equally responsible for the return of the members of those Forces to peacetime occupations. I believe that more than half of the Fighting Forces has been discharged now.

Mr. Mann: And are out of work looking for a job!

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Not too many of them!

Mr. NEEDHAM: I believe that some unfortunately are out of work, the number in this State being 1,180. I do not consider that to be a very great number.

Mr. Mann: There should be no unemployment in this State.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I am telling the hon. member what the figure is. I got it within the last few days.

The Minister for Lands: Many of them are unable to work.

Mr. NEEDHAM: We have to remember that many of those men do not wish to return to the occupation they followed prior to their enlistment and that there is some difficulty, naturally, in placing them in the employment which they desire. When this nation was called upon to mobilise its forces to repel the enemy, it undertook a gigantic task, a colossal task. The work of rehabilitation will be just as colossal and just as heavy. In fact, it will be more difficult to get the members of the Fighting Forces back to civil employment than it was to take them from civil employment and place them in the various arms of the Services. If we look at the matter by and large and realise the many difficulties in the way, we must admit that the work of rehabilitation is proceeding fairly satisfactorily. While I admit, with the member for Beverley, that many men are still unemployed, I ask him to remember that many of them have been offered employment which they will not accept because of a change in their family circumstances, and their natural desire to engage in some employment better than that in which they were engaged prior to their enlistment. Australia to my mind is in a

more favourable position with respect to rehabilitation than are other countries among the Allied Nations.

Mr. Doney: Such as?

Mr. NEEDHAM: Australia has not suffered in any way the horrors of war. None of our factories has been destroyed by bombs from the air. Unlike Great Britain and other Allied Nations whose factories were destroyed as the result of warfare, our factories have remained intact. Other nations have had to rebuild their factories before they could start work again. We all know what Great Britain went through during the war years; but, notwithstanding that her factories were destroyed, she is today—a year or so after the cessation of hostilities—almost up to her pre-war standard of export, a wonderful thing for Great Britain. While the work of rehabilitation is, as I have already said, the sole responsibility of the Commonwealth Government, naturally that Government must have the co-operation of the various States to make it effective. The States collaborated and co-operated with the Commonwealth Government during the time of trial, and I am sure they will do the same thing now in order to expedite the work of rehabilitation, and to see that those men and women who were in the Services are restored to civilian employment as soon as possible.

During recent years, the question of workers' welfare has been receiving long-delayed attention. Something has been accomplished in this State and in the Commonwealth by way of providing much-needed amenities, but despite that fact a lot remains to be done. Australia has the reputation of being a workers' paradise. The workers of this country are better off than those in any other country, but in many respects other countries are much ahead of Australia so far as the welfare of the worker is concerned—that is to say, with regard to his health and his welfare generally. I have here a document which refers to what has been done in Great Britain for the workers' welfare. Not long ago we used to refer to Great Britain as a conservative country, but of recent times I think Great Britain has been setting an example to other parts of the world in the matter of social reform. This is from the Public Relations Office of the High Commissioner in Canberra for the

United Kingdom, and it is headed "Welfare Work Extends in Industry. Britain's Approach to Increased Efficiency Stresses Health of Worker as Key Factor." It reads, in part—

Stream-lined and equipped for mass-production during the war to such an extent that, per head of population, she achieved a higher output than any other nation, Britain has now turned in her search for still greater industrial efficiency to new means of achieving the highest efficiency of the workers themselves.

The practical expression of this is seen, mainly, in the rapid spread throughout industry of provisions for the welfare of workers, and these provisions are quickly approaching the high standard already aimed at in Britain's social services which, in turn, provide for the workers' welfare in their home and civic environment. The two, indeed, are becoming closely linked. For instance, the equivalent of the Plant or Maintenance Engineer for the machine is, in the case of the workers, the Works Medical Officer and his nursing staff, and as these are appointed they co-ordinate their day-to-day work with that of the Medical Officer of Health for the town in which the factory is situated, the latter being the municipal officer.

One of the duties of the Works Medical Officer is to examine all new juvenile employees, and from the Medical Officer of Health, the Schools Medical Officer and the Director of Education of the Local Authority, he can obtain the early history of the employee which is essential to his diagnosis. In many towns there are springing up also civic societies, which hold regular meetings for discussion of civic and industrial problems, and these are attended by the welfare officers from both industry and local authority.

From that, it will be seen that great progress is being made in Great Britain in catering for the welfare of the worker.

Another matter to which I wish to refer is the basic wage. I think I made reference on a former occasion to the undoubted fact that the method by which the basic wage is arrived at is not a true reflex of the cost of living for those who have to work under basic wage rules. I think at that time it was suggested that the Commonwealth Government should institute an inquiry with a view to altering the regimen and including many items of food that are not included, and also survey the position with regard to house rents. I understand that, if it has not already been appointed, a Federal committee will be selected shortly to go into the matter with the idea of altering the formula. I

suggest to the Premier that when he attends the next Premiers' Conference in August he should ascertain whether the committee has begun its inquiries. There is not the slightest doubt that the basic wage, or rather the manner in which it is arrived at, is very unjust to the workers of Australia. I have here a reference to a meeting in the Old Country at which the same matter was discussed. The remarks I am about to quote were made by Alderman James Hickey, at an Advisory Tribunal in Cork, when an application was made for a bonus for packers and shop porters employed in the drapery firms in Cork, and also on behalf of carmen and lorry drivers employed by carriers in the city. Alderman Hickey said—

There are thousands of workers whose wages are directly affected by the rise and fall of this precious index figure. To us it is little more than a statistical fable. It does not fit the actual cost of living of a single family in this city, or in any part of the country. The basis of this cost of living index figure is a series of working-class household budgets collected in 1914. Each item in those ancient documents is brought up-to-date in price, and the official calculators worked it all out. Life has changed tremendously in almost every way since then. Practically everything we buy and eat is different. Electric light has replaced paraffin oil lamps. Cinemas were not part of our lives, and fares were small; average working-class rents were very far below 10s. per week, beer and tobacco prices were negligible. Yet we continue to relate our cost of living back to 1914, an era not even remembered by anyone under 30 years of age.

We have to realise that today many of the things which a few years ago were considered to be luxuries for the workers are now regarded as necessities. It is more than time that this matter was attended to. Vegetables, fruit, fish—all necessary for every family, and particularly for growing children—are beyond the average man on the basic wage.

Mr. Mann: And the middleman gets the profit.

Mr. NEEDHAM: Yes.

Mr. Mann: Of course he does, and your Government permits it.

Mr. NEEDHAM: With regard to house rents, I understand the figure allowed is 19s. 11d. per week. But where can one obtain a house today for any family to live in—anything that could be called a house—for that rental? So I again suggest to the Premier that he try to find out at the next

meeting of the Premiers' Conference what progress has been made with this inquiry, so that as soon as possible the basic wage will be formulated on items which include the necessary things I have mentioned and a proper allowance for house rent. The question of housing was referred to in the Lieutenant-Governor's Speech. We were told that the Government has started an inquiry into the housing problem. When the Premier made that announcement, he also said that houses were now being built at the rate of 2,000 a year. He added that we had a very big leeway to make up and that something like another 10,000 houses are required.

The Government has appointed Mr. Wallwork to make inquiries into building operations and I welcome that item of news. The Government could not have obtained a better man for the purpose, but I am hoping that the inquiry, as it proceeds, will reveal some information not only about building materials, but about the extraordinary cost of houses today. The prices being charged for houses are far beyond the average worker to pay. A few years ago it was possible to secure a four-roomed house with a kitchen for something like £850, but a house of that kind at that price cannot be obtained today. I admit that the basic wage has gone up a little since then, but not to such an extent that the increased cost of houses can be attributed wholly to the increased cost of labour.

I notice that the President of the Master Builders' Association referred a little while ago to the cost of housing. He said that a brick house costing £875 to build in 1939 would cost £1,095 today, representing a rise of nearly 25 per cent. He also worked out the cost of a timber home of an approved size at £975, compared with £820 pre-war. A typical house of this price would consist of two bedrooms, kitchen, living-room, bathroom, entrance porch and hall, back verandah and laundry. This would allow a floor-space of 800 square feet for the main building, 175 square feet for the porch and verandah and 71 square feet for the laundry and lavatory, giving an over-all floor-space which would conform to Workers' Home Board requirements. Mr. Hawkins said the increase in price of this type of dwelling is due to heavy rises in the prices of vital materials. He specified these rises; bricks nearly double, stone foundations, nearly double, and joinery 10 per cent.

I sincerely hope that as the result of the inquiry now being carried on by Mr. Wallwork not only will we get some information as to the production of building materials, but some information as to the cause of the great increase in prices of materials. While houses cost so much it will be impossible for the average worker to buy one. It is the desire of every man to have his own home and he realises that paying rent is by no means an economic proposition. When the price of a house, fit for a man, his wife and two or three children to live in, is fixed at upwards of £1,000 it takes him a lifetime, and portion of the lifetimes of his children, to become the owner of that house. I hope something will be done to ease the price of houses.

**MR. PERKINS** (York) [5.18]: In the early stages of the speech of the member for Perth he had something to say about the difficult position facing the various peoples of the world as to both industrial and political conditions, and the fact that there is not much evidence that those difficulties are going to become less in the immediate future than they are at present. I think most members will agree that the world situation is indeed very difficult and that it is not something that will be righted over night. I expect we will have varying opinions as to the immediate steps that should be taken to improve that position, but I think members will agree that, looked at over a long period, the only way in which we will ever resolve these difficulties, and get the affairs of the various peoples of the world back on a basis where they can co-operate with less friction than exists today, is to see that those peoples are much better informed about the effects that decisions taken in their own particular spheres will have on various other peoples. The difficulty now is that so many of us are inclined to look at problems only from the point of view of how they affect ourselves in our own immediate environment, without viewing them from the wider angle to which I have referred. For many years I have been impressed with the necessity for some action to be taken to enable the people of our own country—and of other countries as well—to improve their knowledge of political and economic questions.

**Mr. North:** There is more and more to learn.

**Mr. PERKINS:** That is so. The position is becoming more and more complicated. In my maiden speech in this House I referred to this question and suggested that, in order to do something towards this end in our own community, we should take steps to improve the accessibility of books to our people. Although the newspapers, the radio and various other agencies can do a lot towards informing the people on vital questions I think it will be agreed that none of those agencies offers an entirely satisfactory substitute for books. I am pleased to say that the Government, when the member for Geraldton was Premier, looked on the proposal favourably, and we had set up what is now known as The Country Free Lending Library Scheme. I remember having a deputation to the then Premier, and he called for a report from Dr. Battye of the Perth Public Library. As the result of that a committee was set up, of which Dr. Battye was chairman and the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe and myself were among the members. Owing to the activities of that committee, and the promise of the Government to subsidise any country community on a £ for £ basis, there are now operating in Western Australia 36 of these country libraries. I think it will be agreed that that has been a very satisfactory beginning.

The centres that are taking advantage of the scheme are Balingup, Dalwallinu, Quairading, Broomehill, Capel, Victoria Plains Road Board, Calingiri, Bruce Rock, Merredin Road Board, Augusta-Margaret River Road Board, Narrogin District Library, Chittering Road Board, Moolabeenee, Boulder, York, Koorda, Moora, Dundas Road Board, Norseman, Kondinin, Narembeen, Goomalling, Dumbleyung, Morowa, Upper Blackwood Road Board, Parkerville, Kojonup, Wyalkatchem, Collie, Wickepin, Tambellup, Three Springs, Manjimup Road Board, Kulin Road Board, Mingenew Road Board, Esperance Road Board, Dandaragan Road Board, Port Hedland Road Board, and Dowerin Road Board. Nearly all of those centres have taken advantage of the maximum subsidy, which means that the Government is finding anything up to £1,800 per year, while the centre concerned finds a like amount. This result has been extremely gratifying and encouraging, and I have no doubt that we have taken the steps to lay the foundation of a proper library scheme in this State.



My reason for mentioning this library scheme this afternoon is that it is one of the few instances where the country districts are getting something that the metropolitan area is not getting. I am surprised that various bodies in the metropolitan area have not taken steps to emulate the country districts in this regard. The availability of books to the public in the metropolitan area is now not much greater than it was in the country districts prior to this scheme being instituted. I hope that interested bodies in the metropolitan area will take steps to institute a similar scheme here. I agree that there is no responsibility on the Government to take action in the matter until the people of Perth take steps to help themselves.

It is obvious that if a free lending library scheme is to be started in Perth on a basis similar to that of those free libraries operating in the capital cities of the Eastern States, the Perth City Council will have to be prepared to give some assistance in the matter and action will have to be taken by the various other interested people in the metropolitan area. Until the people of Perth do take some action it will not be possible to have a proper over-all scheme to serve the whole of the State. At present the country scheme is functioning well from the Perth Public Library, but if there were any great increase in its volume it would throw a heavy burden on the officers concerned. I think it most desirable that a central library in Perth should act as the general co-ordinating centre of the scheme. That is the basis of the set-up in the other States, as far as they have gone, and the agreed opinion of competent librarians seems to be that that is the way in which the scheme should be organised.

Turning to other matters, during the war we have heard a great deal from the Commonwealth and other Governments about the virtues of decentralisation, but not much has been done about it during the war years. I suppose that no great amount of action was possible then. I hope the talk about the desirability of decentralisation will have a rather more successful ending than had the talk we heard about the new order, during the war, from Commonwealth Government and other Government spokesmen. As regards the new order which we were promised, much of the talk about which was little better than hot air, many people who indulged in

such talk were the least prepared to take the necessary action to bring the new order about. What many of those people overlooked was that, if we were going to have a new or better order, it could come about only as a result of hard work and the expenditure of much energy, and those people apparently were not the ones who were prepared to apply these requirements to themselves or advocate them for others. I think it was the Labour leader in New Zealand—I cannot recollect his name—who, when in Australia a few months ago, pointed out that the only way in which we could achieve a high standard of living was by means of a high standard of production. There he uttered a very obvious truth as regards our political economy, a truth that a great many people in this country need to take to heart.

There are some people who believe we can achieve a high standard of living by simply taking something from one man and giving it to somebody else. We might be able to even things a little by that process, but it has its limitations. If we are going to raise the standard of living to any material extent, the only way to do it is by considerably raising our level of production. This is a point that should be borne in mind when we are considering any measures that are brought before this Parliament. The elected representatives of the people in other Parliaments, of course, have their responsibilities; no one can solve the problem entirely on his own account. This applies equally to the leaders of industry, whether they be employers or employees. No doubt we all desire to see a higher standard of living brought about, and it behoves all of us to take the necessary action so that that standard may be raised gradually to a higher plane. I repeat that, in my opinion, the only way to do this is by ensuring that our over-all production is maintained on a gradually rising plane. After all, the most we can get is the total production divided by the number of people who have to share it.

Decentralisation is a very worthy objective, but if we are going to attain it obviously we must take steps to make conditions in those areas to which we want people to return as attractive as conditions in the areas to which the people have shifted at some later stage. To do this, probably many suggestions could be offered by members of this House. I intend to suggest one or two

methods, and I do not claim that they are original. The first one is the granting of aid for the establishment of country swimming pools. I understand that, while the Country Party was in office in Victoria, it developed a policy of aid to local communities in order to establish swimming pools in inland areas and that this policy is being continued by the Labour Government which succeeded the Country Party in that State. This is a matter which should receive the very serious consideration of the Government of Western Australia. Many of our local authorities desire to aid their people in the establishment of swimming pools, and although at present, while we are in the middle of our winter, it seems rather absurd to be talking about swimming pools, during the summer months they are a means of materially improving the conditions for permanent residents in our country areas.

Unless such amenities are developed in the country areas I am afraid there will always be a tendency for men, who have amassed sufficient wealth to live in retirement, rather than make their homes in country towns to go to the metropolitan area where such amenities exist. I think members will agree that this is a process that has been going on for many years, and it is in marked contrast to what has been occurring in other of the more highly developed States of the Commonwealth. Anyone who knows the inland towns of Victoria, New South Wales or South Australia is aware that it is a common practice for farmers who have done reasonably well and have been able to start their sons on the land to retire to country towns rather than move to the metropolitan area. It is the natural thing for such people to do; all their friends and associations are in those areas where they have lived.

If reasonable amenities were provided in the districts where they had spent the greater part of their lives, the most natural thing would be for them to spend the evening of their lives in those districts. So far, with a few exceptions, this has not been the experience in Western Australia. If we adhere to the belief in the desirability of bringing about decentralisation, our policy should be to encourage such a development here. I commend this matter to the consideration of the Government and hope it will follow the lead given by Victoria and adopt a policy of helping on a pound-for-pound, or some other basis, the country areas that are

prepared to instal swimming pools in order to enhance the attractiveness of their districts.

There is another matter to which I wish to refer, though not with any idea of setting forth any very definite opinions upon it. I should like the Minister for Health, when introducing his Estimates, which I understand are to be brought down this session at an earlier stage than usual, to give us a fairly full statement as to how the free hospital scheme is working. I understand from some of our country hospital committees that the free hospital scheme, as brought into being recently under the subsidy made available by the Commonwealth Government is having a very disastrous effect on the finances of some of those country hospitals.

The Minister for Lands: In what way?

Mr. PERKINS: They say that the free hospital patients are not paying.

The Minister for Lands: Why should they pay if the scheme is free?

Mr. PERKINS: I mean that they are not a paying proposition. No doubt the Minister knows more about the financing of the scheme than I do. I believe that for these patients hospitals receive 6s. 0 6s. 6d. a day from the Commonwealth Government—

The Minister for Lands: Six shillings

Mr. PERKINS:—and other subsidy from the Health Department in this State, which is supposed to level up to the hospitals the cost of providing free beds for such patients. The committee hospitals are bound to provide free beds for patients who ask for them.

The Minister for Lands: That is not so

Mr. PERKINS: I hope the Minister will give us a clear picture of the scheme when the Estimates are brought down.

The Minister for Lands: If the hospital provide a public ward and people go in there, they get 6s. towards the upkeep. If they go into a private hospital, they get 6

Mr. PERKINS: The Minister knows as well as I do that many of the hospitals are not constructed in a way to make it possible to carry out that policy in its entirety. The scheme was brought in hurriedly, and the result has been that patients occupying free beds have been mixed up with patients occupying intermediate beds. The hospital

committees are trying to remedy this as quickly as they can alter their buildings, and are endeavouring to provide free wards. But even here difficulties arise. As the committee hospitals have operated in the past, when patients entered they were all more or less intermediate patients. Those who could pay did pay in full; others paid in part, while some did not pay anything at all, but there was no distinction between the patients in the different categories.

The Minister for Lands: And the average collection throughout the State was 5s. 10d. per day.

Mr. PERKINS: That is by the way. Under the new scheme, in the average small country hospital, we have some patients in free wards. If they cannot pay, they have to go into free wards. Other patients are in intermediate wards, and some are in private rooms. The result is that this system is creating a nasty social distinction between these classes of patients. When visitors go to a hospital, they ask to see a certain patient and are told that he is in the free ward, which is usually the poorest-type ward in the hospital. This is causing a certain amount of heart-burning, and I am afraid the outcome may be that many of the patients will endeavour to pay for a bed in the intermediate ward rather than suffer from this social distinction. I know there have been some heartburnings in that direction. I do not pose as an authority on the free hospital scheme. So many questions are there that members are called upon to examine, that one cannot be an authority on everything. I should like the Minister for Health when speaking on the Estimates to present a full picture of how the scheme is working and what the effect of it is upon country hospitals.

Mr. Seward: Plenty of people are demanding free beds.

Mr. PERKINS: There are many complications. I do not know what the effect would be on the public hospital in Perth. It seems to me that so long as anyone is willing to wait his time, irrespective of his financial position, because he wants to get into the Perth Hospital there cannot be any question of distinction between him and another on the financial side. There is no means test at present. Even if a person is earning £1,000 a year he has as

much right to go into a free bed in the Perth Hospital as has the man whose income is only £100 a year.

The Minister for Lands: There are nothing else but free beds in the Perth Hospital.

Mr. PERKINS: I wonder whether the scheme will not result in so many people endeavouring to get into the free beds at the Perth Hospital that it will defeat its own object—until the necessary building programme can be undertaken—and whether many of the poorer people who are unable to pay the fees of private hospitals will be prevented from getting into the Perth Hospital within a reasonable time. This matter is one that concerns metropolitan members more than it does me as a country member, and it is one upon which the Minister for Health should give the House a considerable report. Even if country hospitals are still able to maintain their solvency that is only being done by means of constant appeals for donations to the people of the district concerned.

In my electorate wherever committee hospitals exist continual appeals are being made for donations to keep those institutions going. There is a distinction between the service which the people in country hospitals are getting and that which is obtainable in the metropolitan area. People in the metropolitan area get free hospital service without being called upon to give donations such as people in the country districts are called upon to give to their hospitals. I admit that the donations are given freely because it is generally realised that we must keep the country hospitals going, but the people there are treated on a different financial basis from that which is applied to people in the metropolitan area. Through their income tax people in the country districts are paying towards a free hospital scheme and they are also being asked to pay by way of donations to their own hospitals in order to provide adequate hospital services in their districts.

The Minister for Lands: That is one of the disabilities from which they have always suffered.

Mr. PERKINS: I am glad to hear the Minister admit that it has been a disability.

The Minister for Lands: I preached that doctrine almost before you were born.

Mr. PERKINS: I did not hear the Minister preach it but I hope he will make a feature of it far and wide. Too many people fail to realise that the reason for much of the drift to the city is that country people are asked to provide many things which the city people have given to them. We shall have gone a long way down the road if the Government will admit that. If it does admit it I take it that it will take steps to iron out the anomaly as soon as possible.

I should now like to refer to the conditions appertaining to some of the country hospitals. No doubt the Minister for Health is faced with a difficult problem in view of the shortage of building materials. The conditions found in some country hospitals, in view of the fact that very few repairs were carried out during the war, are simply deplorable. Those at the York hospital, for instance would, I am sure, shock many members were they to see them. A new maternity wing has been built there in recent years, but it does not reflect a great deal of credit on the Public Works Department seeing that the foundations were merely scooped out in such a way that the subsequent building more resembles a cellar than anything else. The condition of the old hospital is deplorable.

The Minister for Lands: The member for Murray-Wellington contends that the hospital at Pinjarra is the worst in the world.

Mr. PERKINS: I do not wonder that the Health Department has difficulty in inducing nurses to go on the staff of these hospitals when they are asked to live in the quarters that are provided for them. In some instances the buildings themselves are almost a hundred years old.

The Minister for Lands: The Premier says he has one of the worst hospitals in the State at Carnarvon.

Mr. PERKINS: Those buildings were not designed for human habitation a hundred years ago but are now being used for the housing of nurses. The Minister for Health visited York recently and has promised to have some improvements effected. The matter is urgent and I hope he will not forget his promise. If some considerable improvement is not made in the quarters attached to country hospitals—and this applies more or less to hospital facilities generally—girls will not be encouraged to enter the profes-

sion and thus remedy the desperate shortage of nurses that exists at present. It is a wonder to me that girls ever volunteer for the profession in view of the deplorable conditions under which they are asked to work, both during their training and after they have become trained.

Since I have been a member of this House I have stated on more than one occasion that the three basic services which country people are entitled to ask of the Government, and the Government must provide, are firstly education, secondly water supplies, and thirdly transport. I do not propose to deal with the first two matters at any length to-night. They are roughly in that order of importance. The Minister for Education has been through most of the districts and he has been helpful in my electorate, and has given an assurance that the department will take action as soon as the necessary building material is available. I accept that assurance and will have no reason to criticise him until he fails to carry out his promise.

Transport, however, is in a somewhat different category. We have facilities of all kinds, but even at present I do not believe we are making the best use of those that are available. The two main means of transport are road and rail. Air transport is being developed and no doubt will become bigger and bigger in the future. The two principal services that are available are road and rail. Although the Transport Co-ordination Act has been passed, I do not think we have had by any means the best possible co-ordination between road and rail. I am surprised that the present Government has not taken action long before this to have a searching inquiry into the best way of improving that co-ordination for the future. There is no indication whatsoever that the co-ordination is to be improved at any time in the future so far as can be ascertained.

We note that the Government has a very intensive building programme in hand for the railways. It has built new locomotives and new rollingstock of different kinds, and has half-a-dozen large Diesel units on order from England. I am not at all sure that the Government realises all the implications and difficulties of the transport position to-day. During the war, so far as passenger transport is concerned, people were forced to use the railways. Had the Government adopted a more progressive and active

policy I believe it would have been possible for it to hold the goodwill which was built up during war-time. People had become accustomed to travel by rail and whereas in some cases before the war they would drive to Perth by car, because reasonable facilities by rail were available they arrived at the conclusion that it was not a payable proposition to come by road. So far as one can see the department has no plans that it can put into force in the immediate future for the provision of facilities that will enable it to hold that traffic. In the near future we may expect increased supplies of new motorcars, that petrol rationing will be lifted as well as tyre rationing, and that we shall revert approximately to the pre-war position in the matter of road transport.

If no satisfactory public transport is available to serve the country areas, it will be an easy matter for anyone to drive to Perth with other people who may also have that object in view, merely by some of the passengers providing the petrol. That will mean a loss to the railway system. So far as can be judged, the activities of the department are all in the direction of trying to hold that traffic by means of rail passenger services, but in my opinion it cannot do so. I do not think people are prepared to spend eight hours on a trip of 160 miles by rail when they can do the journey by car in about half the time and probably in greater comfort. I would not like to criticise the Minister for Railways personally, because since he has taken over the department we have found a much more sympathetic attitude displayed towards many of the requests which have been put forward compared with what existed previously. I realise the difficulties confronting him.

Some of the troubles in the re-organising of the departments were made evident last night in the speech of the Leader of the Opposition. But the fact remains that, although the Minister for Railways announced that he was going to develop a system of road services, and mentioned two particular routes where he was going to put buses, so far as I know the buses have not yet been obtained and nothing has been done to develop these routes. I recently saw an announcement by the Minister for Railways that no buses were available. I am surprised at that because according to a paragraph in a recent issue of "The West Australian"

the Midland Railway Company made this announcement—

The general manager of the Midland Railway Company (Mr. D. W. Brisbane) has announced his company's intention to inaugurate road services and to provide the latest type of modern passenger omnibuses for this purpose. Mr. Brisbane said yesterday that some difficulty had been experienced in obtaining the necessary vehicles, but the first omnibus chassis had now arrived in Western Australia and the construction of a modern comfortable and roomy body was well in hand.

With the approval of the West Australian Transport Board a daily return service between Moora and Perth was to be inaugurated, and would commence within three months. As the omnibuses became available, consideration would be given to extension of the services throughout the territory served by the Midland Railway. Plans were in hand for the erection at Moora of a depot for the servicing of the omnibuses and accommodation of the operating staff.

In "The West Australian" also there have appeared advertisements for new eight-ton heavy duty truck chassis suitable for truck-trailer combination. Whether they are suitable for road bus services I do not know, but the fact that the Midland Railway Company is able to start a service to Moora, and the State railway system is unable to obtain buses to commence the services on the two routes, announced as being the policy of the Government, seems to indicate that the Midland Railway Company is able to do something which the State Railway Department cannot. I think it would be just as well if the Minister for Railways made some announcement as to just what are the intentions of the Government in this matter. I am afraid that the present set-up in the railways has prevented any extension of the road transport system by the department.

When I first advocated the Railway Department's commencing a service between Perth and Naremben—the route would be from Perth through York, Quairading and Bruce Rock to Naremben; and Naremben, by the way, has a very unsatisfactory rail service on a roundabout route—I thought it was entitled to some consideration. Obviously if any kind of bus service is commenced it will cause competition in goods traffic with the Railway Department. But in view of the lack of push and energy shown by the department I am beginning

to wonder if we did the right thing in asking it to go into this business. Whether it would be possible to get a license from the Transport Board for a private service to be started in that area—of course paying a license to the Transport Board—is something that can only be determined after an application is made for such license. But if the Railway Department is going to adopt a dog-in-the-manger attitude and prevent any private persons from obtaining licenses for those runs where the Railway Department service is very poor, then the department should display a great deal more energy than it has up to now.

I am also informed that the Kojonup bus service, which is run by the department, has not been provided with proper facilities. It is only a kind of appendage to the Railway Department, and seems to be nobody's baby. It is looked on by the regular railway officers as something entirely alien to the rest of their activities and something which should not be encouraged. I am afraid that that must be the difficulty that the Minister has to contend with. Judging by the statements he has made and the reports he has given in this House, there seems to be plenty of willingness on his part to develop these road transport services in conjunction with the railways, but when we find that, notwithstanding that he stated that as soon as possible routes were to be developed between Perth and Narembreen, and Perth and Manjimup, 12 months after the war has ended no action, apparently, has been taken, we begin to wonder whether the department is a suitable one to handle these road transport services. It might be better for the Government to consider establishing an entirely new department to handle road transport!

The Minister for Mines: You might have an opportunity to give a vote on that in a few months' time and I feel that you will not do it when it comes before you.

Mr. PERKINS: I am pleased to hear that statement from the Minister.

The Minister for Mines: Up to date all you have been talking is tommy-rot!

Mr. PERKINS: Possibly. The Minister—

The Minister for Mines: One does not get much encouragement from you fellows.

Mr. PERKINS: The Minister will have an opportunity to reply to what I am saying. The fact remains that announcements were made a long while ago that the Railway Department was going to develop road services, and a later announcement was made by the Minister that no buses were available and, on top of all that we have, in recent days, the statement from the Midland Railway Company that it has been able to obtain buses to commence a service between Perth and Moora. That company intends to extend the service along the Midland line. We, who represent country districts, are entitled to ask what the State Government is doing to provide a service similar to that which the Midland Railway Company finds it can give to its clients. That is all I ask. I do not think the criticism I have been making tonight is unfair in any shape or form, and I am surprised that the Minister for Mines and Railways should take the exception that apparently he is taking to my remarks. Obviously we are all concerned with the providing of a satisfactory transport system.

The Minister for Mines: Do not you think it concerns me?

Mr. PERKINS: I have no doubt it does, and the Minister might be having a worse time than any of us.

The Minister for Mines: Why do you not come to me and get the facts before making statements that are not true?

Mr. PERKINS: The Minister can correct what I have said if it is necessary.

The Minister for Mines: I have —

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. PERKINS: The subject of the department's passenger services is one on which I have spoken previously in this House. I think the department could well make more inquiries than it apparently has done as to whether rail passenger services are paying. I mentioned previously, as an illustration, that we have a Diesel service on the Corrigin-Bruce Rock-York-Perth line. The Diesel car leaves Bruce Rock at 7.30 a.m. There are two stock trains in front of it on the Bruce Rock-York line and it is scheduled to pass one of them at Shackleton and the other between Quairading and Balkuling. It is necessary for these stock trains to remain at the sidings where they have stopped to enable the Diesel car to pass while the Diesel catches up one see

tion and gets one section ahead. Diesel rail cars are capable of carrying 76 people, and occasionally they have more than that number, but the average load is probably 35 to 40 passengers. It will be difficult to maintain even that number when the private cars are again on the road.

In costing the different classes of traffic, so far as I can gather from the Railway Department, no allowance is made for the time spent by the crews of the goods trains while the Diesel rail car is passing them. That cost must be very considerable, but under the department's costing system the revenue from goods goes into the goods traffic and the cost of running these goods trains is charged against the goods traffic. The cost of running the Diesel cars is charged against the passenger traffic and the revenue from the Diesel services is credited to passenger traffic. But, in fact, the costs of the goods traffic are being materially raised by reason of that particular passenger traffic being given priority. Yet, so far as I am able to gather, no allowance is made for that in the department's accounts. The result is that an impression—a false one—is created in the minds of railway officers and in the minds of members of the general public that the passenger traffic is something of a gold mine, and that the goods traffic is, perhaps, run at a loss. If the proper costs were allowed against the passenger traffic and a proper set-off made against the goods traffic on account of the delays caused by the passenger traffic having priority on lines such as these, my opinion is that the goods traffic would be shown in a much better light than it is at present.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Mr. PERKINS: At the tea adjournment I was discussing the distribution of costs between passenger and goods traffic, particularly on single-track railway lines, and the distribution of costs generally as between those two classes of income received by the Railway Department. I said I was certain that the passenger traffic was not nearly as profitable to the Railway Department as the department seemed to believe it was. It is difficult for any private member to be dogmatic on this point, but I would urge the Railway Department to conduct a much more careful examination than it appears to have done at any stage in the past into this

question of costs and income, as between those two classes of traffic. Viewing the matter generally, I think any one of us is justified in stating that there are many points at which the costs could be cut, were it not that special provision has to be made for passenger traffic. In the past and, we hope, to a greater degree in the future, we have had both good roads and the railway lines available.

We have the choice of carrying goods or passengers over either roads or railways. A sensible distribution seems to be to carry the light traffic—the passenger traffic—over the roads, and the heavy goods traffic over the railways. That is the point that impresses me in the case for the Railway Department running the road services, because in those circumstances it would be able to balance one type of traffic against the other. I think that is the reason why members on this side of the House would support the Railway Department in providing a passenger service on the roads. Perhaps the Government has inquired further into the position than I am aware of. Judging by the reaction of the Minister to the remarks I made before the adjournment, he may have information that I have not, but he can hardly blame me for making those remarks if he has in his possession information that he has not passed on to members. The fact remains that there are certain areas that are not being satisfactorily served by the railways at present in the matter of passenger traffic, and those areas are asking for an improved service which, up to date, the Railway Department has not been able to provide. The Midland Railway Company has taken action and is providing an improved passenger service on its line. I have no doubt that a properly run passenger service can do much to hold some of the wartime emergency passenger traffic.

On one of the routes that the Minister mentioned at an earlier stage, where the Railway Department contemplates putting on a bus, the Perth, York, Quairading, Bruce Rock and Narembeen route, at the Narembeen end particularly the passenger service is very poor and is over 40 miles longer than the direct route. With a good road right through that area I believe a much higher speed could be maintained than the safe running speed attainable on our lightly constructed railway lines. Provided the Rail-

way Department is prepared to supply that bus service in the reasonably near future, I would be the last one to agitate that the service should be provided by private enterprise. I would stress that, unless action is quickly taken, the Government will lose whatever goodwill has been built up by the Railway Department by reason of the emergency traffic during the war. Unless we are to revert to the position of people driving their own cars to Perth, and carting many of their friends with them, action will have to be taken in order to get road services operating and provide a reasonable service for passengers. On that route which I have mentioned and in which, of course, I am most interested, the road surface is not the best. There is bitumen for 80 miles from Perth, but most of the route has been declared a main road and will be put in good condition in the near future. The local authorities in that area have assured me that if the Railway Department is prepared to get on with the job and get the services operating, it will have 100 per cent. co-operation from them. The road boards in that area have a considerable amount of equipment.

The Bruce Rock Road Board has recently purchased special truck loading equipment, a bulldozer and a large carry-all scoop, which I understand is bigger than anything in the possession of the Main Roads Board. The Bruce Rock Road Board also has two large patrols. The chairman of that board assures me that they will co-operate and make that equipment available to the Main Roads Board, whenever possible, in order to push that road through and make the surface suitable for a bus service. Of course it would be better to have a bitumen road right through, but a good gravel surface is quite all right for buses to run on. In the Eastern States, earlier in the year, I travelled by many of the road services and I was impressed by the service given by some of them.

As an instance, I would mention the service provided by Ansetts Road Services, from Portland through to the Murray. There is one long stretch, from Hamilton to Horsham, which was sparsely populated when that road service was instituted. I have no doubt that Ansetts Road Service ran at a loss in the early stages. The amount of development that has taken place simply because of a satisfactory transport service

being provided is very noticeable. There are many farms and small settlements that have developed along that route. I have no doubt that we can do the same thing in this State. If we supply the services it is only natural that population will follow them. If we can provide better transport services for our inland areas that will be a big factor in holding the population there. Many people express themselves as favorable to decentralisation, but Governments and individuals, too, will have to take the requisite steps if it is to become an accomplished fact. I suggest to the Government that a rapid improvement in our transport services, making them fast and comfortable, would be a very big factor indeed.

There are a few minor matters regarding the Railway Department that I wish to mention. Apparently the coal position has materially improved and it should be possible for the department to look for traffic wherever it can be found. I think that as soon as the rolling-stock and coal are available, the department would find it profitable to put on Sunday evening trains from many of our nearer centres to Perth. I understand that a train already runs from Northam to Perth, but it should be possible to extend that further along the Goldfield-line, leaving the more distant stations earlier in the evening. The case is not so good in relation to the Eastern Goldfields line because a train leaves Merredin at 12.30 a.m. on Monday, reaching Perth a little after 8 a.m.

On the Great Southern line, I consider that an excellent case can be made out for a Sunday evening train from York or Beverley or even further south to Perth. People can get out from Perth by railway transport on Saturday, but it is impossible to get back on the existing service in time to start work on Monday morning. If we encourage people to use one service, obviously we should provide the back service to enable them to complete the return journey. These services, possibly, could be more satisfactorily provided by means of road buses, but until road services are instituted the department should seriously consider the running of a Sunday evening train on that line.

I have heard various adverse comments on the change in the running of the Diesels and of their not stopping at suburban stations. The position seems to be that Diesels from



country areas run non-stop from Midland Junction to Perth. This causes some inconvenience to quite a lot of people, who have to alight at Midland Junction and complete the journey by suburban train.

Mr. Watts: Do not suggest an alteration there! When you have travelled from Albany, you do not want to stop at every suburban station.

Mr. PERKINS: I have no wish to be dogmatic, but I should like the department to consider the matter. The last point I wish to make concerns a question of general policy. It is a matter of great moment both to the Government and to the people who have to do business with Government departments that the general administration of those departments should be as efficient as possible. I have no doubt that the general administration in this State will compare reasonably well with that in any other State. I do not wish to draw any comparison. I expect it is inevitable that departmental administration should be more rigid and less flexible than the type of administration found in private concerns. At any rate, the objective should be to make the administration as flexible as possible. I am aware that in the Government departments there are many very good officers, just as good men as are to be found in private concerns, but I am not at all sure that the best use is being made of the talents of those officers. I dare say that members of this House are aware of instances of pinpricking and rigidity in the departments that have done much to discourage such officers. If these disadvantages could be abated, it would make for the efficiency of the administration.

In addition, there seems to be a lack of opportunity in many of our Government departments as compared with the opportunities that exist in private industry. It seems to be the aim of the more efficient private concerns to give their employees as wide an experience and as many opportunities as possible to extend their knowledge and thus improve their efficiency. I understand that much of the success achieved by the Broken Hill Proprietary Company has been due to its policy of giving employees opportunities to visit other parts of Australia and other parts of the world in order to extend their experience and gain first-hand knowledge of developments in other places.

In a speech in this House on a previous occasion, I made a suggestion that was quite well received on the Government bench, namely, that advantage should be taken of the system of long service leave granted to public servants by assisting young officers to go to other parts of Australia or other parts of the world in order to study the type of work in which they are engaged and in which they are interested. When an officer has been in a department for about 10 years, he is approaching the point of becoming one of the men who can make or mar the department. At present, when a Government servant of that type is due for long service leave, he has not enough money to go to some other part of the world to study the work in which he is interested or to take a holiday. In any event, it is hardly likely that he would be prepared to spend what money he had solely to increase his own efficiency for the benefit of the department; he would be looking for some relaxation also. I have no doubt that if the Government provided tickets for suitable officers as well as for their wives to assist them to travel to other places where they could gain useful experience, it would make them much more valuable to the department and would involve the Government in very little cost. I am not suggesting that this might be done for every employee, but a large number of employees would doubtless be glad to take advantage of such assistance.

I should not like to be dogmatic about the amount of assistance that should be granted but if the principle were accepted, suitable arrangements could be made. In my opinion such a scheme would have far-reaching effects on the efficiency of our Government departments. The result would follow that when new equipment was needed in, say, the Railway Department or the Electricity Department or some other of the technical departments, officers would be available who had had the advantage of a kind of study that had made them conversant with the latest developments of the type of equipment required, and there would be no necessity to send somebody away from the State in order to get that information. In any case, I think it very much sounder to be giving that training and experience to the younger men in the Government departments who ultimately will be responsible for the administration and conduct of the

department, as against the older men who have been in the department for many years, have worked up to responsible positions and, in the nature of things, would have to retire in the course of a year or two. The suggestion in my opinion has endless possibilities. It may also be possible to extend the system of exchange between officers in Western Australia and the other States. I understand that has been done in the past in the Education Department; it may have been done in the case of other departments but I am not aware that it has been.

It should be possible to arrange for exchanges of officers within Australia and I have no doubt that it would have a very beneficial effect on the departments concerned. There would be a big broadening of knowledge of the kind of problems which arise in the various States. It seems to me it is all to the benefit of Australia as a whole that the officers of departments in one State should learn of the difficulties confronting similar departments in other States. I do not wish to be dogmatic about it; I realise there may be many problems which are not immediately apparent, but the general principle of allowing younger officers in a department to visit other parts of the world, in order to study developments in the same line of work as that in which they are engaged, is a very important one indeed. The example of the Broken Hill Proprietary Company and the success which it has achieved by the adoption of this principle is something which should be an object lesson to us. I commend the suggestion to the Government and hope there will be some inquiry into it.

**MR. NORTH** (Claremont) [7.53]: The Lieut.-Governor's Speech opens this year with heartfelt remarks about the victory over our enemies, and then it goes on to say that, in common with the rest of the world, the State faces serious problems owing to various things, industry, commerce and so on. While not denying anything contained in those remarks, I would urge that there are other worse problems, complete enigmas, facing the State which are correctly kept out of the Lieut.-Governor's Speech but which should be dealt with on an occasion like this. The first enigma I would refer to deals with the population question. The

Lieut.-Governor's Speech later contains a remark stating that earth-moving equipment, road-making equipment, and land-clearing equipment have been purchased. That raises the very issue I wish to raise in regard to the population question, because we are all aware from reading the newspapers and from speeches that the Commonwealth Government is making a move in regard to immigration and that the State Government is asked to concur in that move. I think the proposal so far announced is that 70,000 migrants a year shall be brought here when shipping is available.

The enigma I would refer to is, first, how far can we by population in Australia, and Western Australia in particular, face the menace of the Eastern world in the future; and secondly, whether the world as a whole—I know these are very big questions and can be easily brushed aside as being beyond our immediate concern—is not far too heavily populated today. I mentioned the acquirement of earth-moving equipment. It is things of that sort which are causing this problem in the world today of excess populations in many places. But if we in Western Australia secure the numbers we require, obviously the Government will need to proceed in a big way with the works forecast in the statement to which I have referred. Recurring to the first question, how are we to get sufficient numbers in sufficient time to be of any use from the point of view of the defence of this country? The question is so difficult that it is hardly ever stressed on the public platform. Even if we secure the number which the Premier mentioned recently in a very interesting and able address, at least 60,000,000, which would be an extreme success, how could we with that number expect to face the rolling millions of the Far East? Therefore, being aware of that difficulty, we have to look to an other sphere if we are to feel comfortable in supporting the local moves mentioned in the Speech for developing this State.

Here I would like, if I may, to digress for a moment to look at the position in Great Britain so far as it concerns the number of people we hope to obtain. I have also read the accounts of the inquiries made by the Commonwealth Government in Europe for immigrants; but in Britain we have a position which I think is really tragic, although it could also be regarded as hav-

ing a humorous side. There was a gentleman writer in the Press—I should have said a humorous writer because of course he would be a gentleman—who wrote on the question of the sale of perfumes in Great Britain and America. He described the wording on those perfumes. One was called “Attar of Petals,” and he said that this particular brand “will set the seal of perfection on her loveliness and enthrall the senses with the pulse-quickenning fragrance of sun-kissed blossoms.” There was another one: “Ecarlate de Suzy.” Its dry winey sparkle seems to loosen some springs in the man of taut nerves and dark moods.” Still another is called “Breathless.” This brand is “made for those moments when your pulse quickens, when you live an eternity, and the world is yours.” Those perfumes are being sold in Great Britain and America today and that is the language employed to sell them. On the other hand, a gentleman who wants to buy some shaving lotion finds this on the package: “Keep tightly closed after using.”

Mr. Doney: Who are the local agents for those perfumes?

The Premier: I thought you looked interested.

Mr. NORTH: The point of my remarks is this: The situation is a very tragic one, because the story of those perfumes is the story of the struggle for a husband by millions of British girls who never can have a husband, because there is a surplus. Those girls are fighting and those are their methods. All the men get is to be told to keep their shaving lotion tightly closed after using! What can we do about that problem? Is it worth while for the Government to consider immigration from the point of view of the surplus women of Britain? We in Australia are a little short of women. I think there are about 50,000 or 60,000 more men than women in the Commonwealth today, which, of course, is not a very great difference. I believe there are nearly 30,000 more men in Western Australia than there are women; but there is this huge surplus of women in Britain, this tragic surplus of eligible bachelor girls who, by mathematical certainties, cannot have husbands under the present moral code. Yet we have the biological urge I have referred to of requiring every possible person we can obtain from other parts of the world to come and

reside in this country so that we may make ourselves more secure in the future. The Premier quoted the number we could actually absorb at the best as being 60,000,000, and I think the House will agree that figure would not meet the danger that lies ahead.

So we must turn to another sphere—the sphere of the United Nations—where Dr. Evatt at this moment, I understand, is speaking on behalf of 17 nations. Australia seems to be getting up along the line a little! I suppose Dr. Evatt is trying to bring about some military plans and secure some economic strength to hold back the economic menace—I will not say the other kind of menace—from the eastern races. But should we stop there? Should we not try to ask ourselves why it is that on the one hand so many of our white races are losing population and are not reproducing themselves, and why it is that on the other hand the eastern races, including Russia—which, in a sense, is partially eastern—are increasing their populations at such a rapid rate? Reasons are given. It is said that in our own country and also in the other democratic nations the small families come from luxurious homes and that in the depressed families—the families on the lower incomes—the birth rate is being maintained. So should it not be the duty of those entrusted with our welfare in the higher levels that we look up to from this lower hill to try to improve the standard of the depressed races so as to make them less inclined to have large families?

What a tragedy there has been in India where the British have, by their engineering achievements, persuaded the Indians to reproduce themselves faster and faster, and have made the problem worse and worse for the world as the years have gone by! So it seems to me that while we have in this Parliament a great duty to perform in local development, yet we have this shadow over our heads. Not merely have we the menace of the numbers of people in other countries; but we are faced with the fact that even if we do our very best we can hardly hope to populate our country sufficiently to withstand the economic stress unless, over the years to come, the United Nations can make a success of the job now being attempted. I take it we all hope that success will be achieved. I hope I have made it clear in my few remarks that, so far as I am concerned, it should be the duty

of the Australian Government and the State Government to give consideration to the question of whether we cannot somehow evolve a plan to absorb a great number of the surplus girls of Great Britain.

In passing, I think a question might well be addressed to the correct source—I take it that would be the Federal sphere—as to what happened during the war years; that is, whether the Aussies brought home more brides from abroad than the British and the Yanks took away from Australia. I wonder what the actual position would be on balance. We should be out to win, because we are the ones that need them most.

The Premier: I think we are due to lose; our girls are so beautiful.

Mr. NORTH: Yes, that is the difficulty. Leaving that question, I turn to the second enigma which worries me—we have to face these things eventually—and that is the question of the quality of the soil we use in Western Australia for the growth of our crops. The other morning I was very glad to hear the “Archer” giving a long d’atribe on that very question, and pointing out that all the food cranks, as he called them, were of no use unless we got down to the fundamental requirement that the soil which grows the food we eat must be absolutely 100 per cent. I would like to know from the Government whether, in dealing with soil erosion—which is referred to in the Speech—it has some plan or some information which might be used by those who grow our various foods with a view first of all to restoring the soil to its original quality, and then maintaining it at that standard. I will not say any more than just that, because it is not a question which concerns a city member directly, though it does concern him very much indirectly.

The third enigma, which has never really been brought into the daylight, is the ever-recurring wage-price problem. In the last three or four weeks America has seen what can happen to a country which tries to abandon controls too soon after a great war. We have seen something resembling chaos in that country, until price control of a kind was again clapped on by the United States Congress. I think that we in this Chamber should find out at the earliest possible moment what is the real answer to that wage-price problem. There are experts who

advocate the lifting of controls and others who advocate their continuance. All we know is that we are all committed, as a Parliament, as individual parties and, I think, as individual members, to a high employment policy. We have never had that before in peacetime; we have only had about a 75 per cent. employment. The result is that nobody can say what will happen after this war when there is full employment and goods are being rapidly produced.

The only guide we have is what happened in America in 1930; and also to the rest of the world. We all remember—and my remarks follow some made by the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe in the very able address he delivered the other afternoon—that the bottom fell out of prices in the United States. The world followed suit, and we know that at that time there was something approaching full employment. They got nearer to full employment at that time than ever before in the history of America. That full employment had one effect—a boom—and that is only another term for what is now called inflation. So there is before us, and we cannot escape it, an enigma. Are we going to be able to turn out full production of goods on a high employment schedule so that the people can enjoy the high standard of living that we all wish to see, without some control? That is an enigma that faces all Parliaments. If it can be achieved without control, so much the better, but I would say, “Thank God for our experience during the war,” because it enables our economic experts, business magnates and financiers to turn to some control with the knowledge that they have gained, which they would not have had had it not been for the war. So there is hope that we shall, this time, achieve that enormous production and distribution without either a boom or a slump. That is the idea.

The question is: What control will be necessary? I think it is an important one and I shall watch with the greatest interest the future happenings in this matter. I might say, in passing, that compared with the United States, we can congratulate ourselves on having done a better job in regard to the dangers of inflation than has America or any other country. The fourth enigma that worries me is the question of the railways. We heard something on this subject tonight from the member for York. After

all it is a question that cannot be shirked. It has to be decided. If members care to look up the description of the origin of railways they will see that in those days, when they were experimenting with steam, great stress was laid on the fact that by putting a metal wheel on a metal rail, a tremendous tractive advantage was gained compared with the same wheel on a road. That does not seem today to have any meaning. The speeches that one hears and the articles that one reads on the question of transport go to show that the motorcar is considered to be just as efficient as a similar vehicle with its wheels on a metal rail. But if one examines the history of the origin of railways one will see that there is a tremendous mechanical advantage to be obtained by pulling a wheel over a rail. I understand that if one takes one of those little trikes worked by the railway men—I forget what they are called—

Mr. Watts: Kalamazoos.

Mr. NORTH: Yes. If they are taken off the rail and put to work on a bitumen road it would be difficult for their crews to get them to go at all.

The Minister for Works: They might go downhill.

Mr. NORTH: If there is a tremendous mechanical advantage to be gained by running a heavy vehicle with metal wheels on a rail, surely, as the matter progresses through the ramifications of a modern railway system, the railways should be successful in handling the bulk of our transport. I am only asking these questions as a humble member trying to follow the ramifications through which we are going today. I can see tremendous hostility to the railways in this State. In addition there are people all over the world who see the advantage of motor transport over all other types. I saw published the other day some details of the bus service to be run from Perth to Moora, and the schedule seemed to me to be very slow. It appeared to work out at about 25 miles per hour.

Mr. Perkins: It is very slow.

Mr. NORTH: If road transport is so much better than the railways it should have a faster schedule. I am a disciple in these matters and am trying to find out what is going on in the world. For the information of members I refer to the United States,

which is a prosperous and efficient democracy, and might be called the home of railways, because there are between 250,000 and 300,000 miles of railways there today. They have trains with which they are not satisfied. From New York to Washington, a distance of 230 miles in round figures, the service was carried out by steam trains which did the journey in about four and a half hours. We, in this State, would call that fairly good going, and so, I think, would the people in most parts of America.

But while one hears a lot of talk around the town and reads statements in the Press that the railways are finished and out-of-date, one learns that the private companies operating in the United States—the railways there are not owned by the Government but by companies run by enterprising men out to make money—have electrified the whole of that line. They were not content to cover the distance in four and a half hours and now do the journey in something over three hours. That does not look to me as though the companies operating in America are going to discard their railway systems. I have read that they are modernising their railways for all they are worth; they are spending millions to make their railways better and better. It seems as though they are operating machines which basically, given the same amount of power, operate more efficiently than do the same machines on the roads.

Mr. Perkins: They also have road services there.

Mr. NORTH: Of course, and anyone who compares the road services of Britain, the United States or Australia with the railways, as to speed over long distance, would find it a very unfavourable comparison. But speed does not have to be the objective. I can visualise many people enjoying a ride on the roads to see the country and to go through different towns. It does not follow that road services should travel the same routes as the railways. I would be the last person to suggest that because we have spent in Australia a matter of £300,000,000 or £400,000,000—to be accurate it is £400,000,000 with all the losses and deficits—we should throw it all away, simply because there is an opportunity ahead of us to provide road services. Why not have both? This country can carry the two.

The taxpayers in this State have provided £27,000,000 for our railways, and those in Australia nearly £400,000,000. Not only do the taxpayers have to meet losses because the railways are not modernised, but they also have an obligation to oversea financiers. I used to be told that they were clergymen, orphans and widows, but I think there are others as well to whom we owe this money. I am sure we wish to honour our obligations, and one way to do that is to see that our railways are modernised and kept up-to-date compared with other services concerned in the development of transport in this State. I cannot see why there should be the rivalry and hostility that exist between the airways—I do not refer to those operating them—and other forms of transport. Some members of the public say they would prefer to go to Melbourne by air in nine hours, others say they get air sick and would rather go by train and take longer, while still others prefer to go by sea.

Mr. Watts: One man set out to walk.

Mr. NORTH: He was a very hopeful fellow. Why should we not visualise all these forms of transport being developed together? A very important question was touched on by the Premier when he mentioned the development of the better areas of Australia to maintain a population of 60,000,000. A population of even half that number would justify great development of our different transport services. I therefore welcome the optimistic attack on the development of the railways being advocated and advertised by the Minister for Railways who says he is determined to bring the old service up-to-date to meet modern conditions. I am completely silent on the question of standardisation. We have had speeches by various experts, and they all take the line that there are other things more important than railway standardisation at the present time. That, of course, cannot be disputed, but it does not answer the question of whether the railways will be standardised or not. All we know from the Press, so far, is that 6,000,000 of Australia's seven and a half million population are now to be served by standardised railways. We are not yet sure whether our Minister for Railways will agree to do something about the matter in Western Australia. Apparently it is still an open question, but I see no reason

why immediate local needs such as the provision of water storage should be delayed in favour of standardisation.

With the tremendous power of productive machinery today, when everything returns to normal in two or three years' time I think we will find that the Minister for Industrial Development will not have much difficulty in putting in hand big jobs that today he cannot touch because of lack of manpower. I believe there will be a complete swing round and that, not many years from now, we will be glad to have available productive works to absorb the unemployed that might exist by that time. Wherever we turn we find the modern business man putting in machinery whenever possible. I think it is all for the best in the long run, though each time it is done it leads to difficulties, with the employees who are being replaced, in other works. The other enigma with which I desire to deal is that of the financial future of this State.

The Premier: I was hoping the member for Claremont had several more.

Mr. NORTH: I wish next to deal with the question of balanced budgets, and Western Australia's position under the Commonwealth today, which was also dealt with in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech in a very optimistic vein that I hope will prove to be a successful forecast. We are told that there is a deficit of £912,000 odd, and that it is hoped the full claim will be met by the Grants Commission.

Mr. Abbott: I think that is a correct assertion, that the statement is full of hope.

Mr. NORTH: That is the way to talk to them. With all the experience of the war and of the handling of enormous numbers of men on large projects, I believe the Grants Commission could prove to be quite a useful body in future. As long as it does the right thing every time and as long as we are fully employed, as a State, many of our troubles may be over. We might leave the headaches to Canberra, while we do the work here. On the other hand we might find that that would not always be so. I know that suggestions do not mean very much during the Address-in-reply, but I think that sometimes something good comes out of them. My experience in Parliament has been that, although the Address-in-reply is often despised, and

though we are told that the sooner it is over the more quickly we will get down to business, more good ideas have come out of the debate than out of any other part of the session. I have seen some of those suggestions followed up at a later date, and I even made one such myself, in 1925.

Mr. Watts: Has it been followed up?

Mr. NORTH: Yes. In 1925 the Government of the day was bringing in a big Bill dealing with arbitration, the famous "McCallum Bill." During the Address-in-reply, before we got to that Bill, the people of Claremont were very anxious that we should have a child endowment scheme. They thought there was not sufficient money coming out of industry to finance all the workers as if they had children, and that the best plan would be to have a child endowment scheme. That appears in "Hansard" for 1925. Fifteen years later the Commonwealth Government did something about it. It is still only an attempt, but it is a move in the right direction.

Mr. Needham: It was mooted in Canberra long before that time.

Mr. NORTH: That may be so. I am only making the suggestion that the Address-in-reply occasionally brings forward something worth while. I do not think the child endowment scheme has reached its final stage yet, but it is invaluable. An idea such as that is worth while bringing forward during a debate of this kind. My experience is that a great many things in this world do depend on 95 per cent. of perspiration and five per cent. of inspiration, but the five per cent. of inspiration is the hardest part to get hold of. A simple instance is that of Edison scratching a record with "Mary Had a Little Lamb" on it, and of the enormous industry that has come out of that incident.

Mr. Rodoreda: Did not Alberta adopt one of your suggestions?

Mr. NORTH: No, that had nothing to do with me; that was the idea of the people of Claremont.

The Premier: Of which part of Claremont?

Mr. NORTH: I was the very humble exponent of the ideas of a large public movement in my district. I did my best, and we know what has happened.

The Minister for Justice: They have not done too badly in Alberta.

Mr. NORTH: I hope we shall hear all about it sooner or later.

The Premier: I have kept my promise to you and have written for information.

Mr. NORTH: I am pleased to hear that. I believe we should have a scientific form of government. When I say "scientific," I mean that it would be silly if all Governments tried to do the same thing at the same time. My idea is that the Russians should go as far as they can with the red policy and that we should go as far as we can with our present democratic policy. If there are other people who decide upon another policy, they should have the right to try it out as Alberta is doing today. However, there is no movement of that sort in my district today.

Mr. Watts: The Alberta proposition is not the one you put up ten years ago.

Mr. NORTH: No. I believe that under the democratic system any Government should support and carry out the policy on which it was returned. One of the Alberta doctrines is that you must have over 50 per cent. of the people with you before you start to do anything.

The Minister for Works: I think they have discarded the A plus B theorem.

Mr. NORTH: Very likely. However, I was discussing the value of the Address-in-reply debate. I regret that I mentioned Claremont ideas because it might appear like an attempt to thrust forward the views of one district. Over the years I have heard valuable suggestions offered during the Address-in-reply debates and some of them have been adopted, though not always in the precise form in which they were offered. I have also heard valuable suggestions made at model Parliaments. There is one in the city now, and some of us were invited to join, but I think members would be wise to keep in the background.

The Premier: Otherwise it would not be model, would it?

Mr. NORTH: I do not know whether the member for Perth is a member of it. As ladies attend, probably he would be there. I think we should glean all the ideas possible from the Address-in-reply debates and from model Parliaments. At a model Parliament which the member for West Perth was conducting some years ago, I heard the suggestion made that the best thing for the world would be if different Governments tried different policies, and that one Government should not try to force all the rest

of the world to its way of thinking as Russia is trying to do. If this idea were adopted we could expect improvement and advancement. I realise that the Premier's interjection knocked me right off the rails. I was dealing with the question of the balanced budget for Western Australia and what we can do in existing conditions. I was expressing the hope that it would be possible for Canberra always to come to light, as is suggested in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech. The Premier has suggested that Canberra might come to light with £900,000 odd to make good the deficit.

The Premier: The member for North Perth seems to suggest that Canberra will not.

Mr. Abbott: I think it is much to hope for.

Mr. NORTH: The present would be a good time for Canberra to come to light, seeing that the Federal election is imminent. I have another suggestion to make regarding our difficulties, if we do not succeed in getting favourable consideration from the Federal authorities and if the Grants Commission should show hostility. If we analyse the Budget, we find that nearly one-half of the money is derived from our public utilities. If things became too difficult we might make a new move. To prove that I am not talking entirely at random, let me go from the large State of Western Australia to the municipality of Durban for an illustration. Most people have heard that Durban runs its entire affairs without any rates at all by means of enterprises conducted by the municipality and obtains a very fine revenue. We have quite a lot of public utilities and, if things became too difficult it might be possible to introduce a policy to make those utilities revenue-producing. Today, of course, our public utilities are despised and reviled by the man in the street, because he does not realise that about one-half of the services they render are not paid for.

The Premier: To do that we could not cart super at ½d. per ton per mile and show a profit.

Mr. NORTH: Then the industries concerned should have to stand on their own economic feet. Our public utilities are not run on business lines; they are doing what Alberta is supposed to be doing—giving quite a lot away. If things become too dif-

ficult, I can foresee the Treasurer inquiring whether he cannot run his public utilities on business lines and obtain the requisite revenue in that way.

Mr. Watts: And charge 5s. for a trolley-bus ride to Claremont?

Mr. NORTH: I do not think that would happen. The people of Western Australia are just as anxious as is the Government about the State's financial outlook under uniform taxation and the difficulties experienced with the Loan Council. I am well aware that the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party, men in responsible positions, have ideas and plans for these problems, which will have to be dealt with sooner or later. This State, quite aside from the financial aspect, is very efficient. It is really extraordinary that Western Australia should be the second greatest producer in the world per head of population, being surpassed only by New Zealand, and it seems wrong that we should have such great difficulty over our finances.

The Minister for Justice: I suppose you agree with the deficit so long as the money is well spent.

Mr. NORTH: I suppose the Loan Council would be able to meet this deficit and then the position would be economically sound. I take it that the books record useful work in return for the expenditure, but seemingly we are dependent upon the financial views of the Loan Council or the Grants Commission.

Mr. Watts: And give Canberra a bigger deficit to meet next year?

Mr. NORTH: It will be seen how it works. I should be very glad at this moment to sit down and let members go home, but there are four or five little matters of local import which I know members will hate to hear. They shuffle their feet when matters of local import are mentioned. But the fact is that many of us would not be here if we were not looking after matters of local import.

The Premier: You have not got a big parish pump!

Mr. NORTH: I hope not, but it runs very vigorously, although it might be a very small bore. I was glad to note in the Speech that the fishing industry is moving forward. We



now have heavy boats with Australian-built Diesel engines and refrigeration. The reason I am particularly glad is because some of my electors have several times made a move in this direction; they, of course, are not the only ones, but they are pleased to know that fishing is to be carried on in a big way. I notice in the Press that there are now tons of good fish coming to Perth from Shark Bay in the big boats which are now engaged in the industry.

I have had a very large fan mail recently over tuberculosis, and I suppose other members have also. Quite a number of electors have written to me on this subject. Following upon that high pressure, I asked a question yesterday and note from the reply given that the State Government is not only making a move somewhat similar to that in New South Wales, but also that the Commonwealth Government intends to spend money in that very good cause. As members are aware, the medical profession states that in 20 years tuberculosis in Australia can be eradicated. I sincerely hope we shall succeed in that noble objective. The plan, as members know, is to obtain a travelling clinic in order to test lungs throughout the State as soon as possible.

Although we seem to be very gloomy about the progress of home-building, nevertheless houses are being erected all over the city. In parts of Swanbourne a strong demand has been made for the deep sewerage to be connected to the houses recently built there. I am sure the Government will give consideration to that matter, if possible on the Estimates. I may frame a question to ascertain what the position is with a view to getting an answer during the session.

The Premier: There are some very nice groups in your district.

Mr. NORTH: Yes. I believe the department has framed subsidiary estimates, but I shall ask a question on that point later on. I think I can let members off with one other matter, which really probably is a metropolitan one. It is the question of crossing over our railways. In the country, people experience no trouble at all in this connection. I do not often go to the country, but I find that on country stations people can cross the line as they like and nobody takes any notice of it. The first time I visited the district of my friend the member for

Greenough I arrived at Mingenew on a very dark night. It was very late and in the dark I mistook the way and walked into the bush. Even though I was a city man, I knew something was wrong because I thought Mingenew was a bigger place than that. In the city the question of crossing railways at stations is becoming a burning one. I do not know why the Government should not adopt the practice followed in Europe and in America. There the stations are simply like a footpath or a sidewalk; there are no platforms, and the passengers can walk across from one side to the other as they do here in our country areas, at least in those parts of the country where I have been. I do not know whether the people do so at Pinjarra, which is a bigger place.

In the very important constituency of North-East Fremantle, which lies just at the foot of the boundary of my electorate, there is a railway bridge about which I may be permitted to make a few remarks in view of the fact that it concerns my electorate. We have, or did have, strict supervision over people crossing the railway. An enormous footbridge was constructed. When elderly people arrived at it panting, they were unable to cross, while ladies with perambulators were quite unable to cross. Now, this is a question which the "dinkum" Aussie has to face up to. I have been watching the thinking cap of the average elector using the station. I looked again last week to be sure of my ground before addressing this Assembly on the subject. This is what I saw. As I said, there is an enormous footbridge which has just been repaired and painted and looks beautiful. Further along there are a couple of gates for cars at the road crossing. Along from the footbridge, which is for use by pedestrians, there is an enormous gate with huge chains hung on it and a sign which reads, "No Admittance. Trespassers will be Prosecuted." That fits in with the road gates; it fits in with the beautiful high bridge and it fits in with the general rules of the Railway Department in the metropolitan area as far as I am aware.

But next to the enormous barred gate, hung with chains and with the sign "Trespassers will be Prosecuted," there is an enormous gap about as large as the huge sounding board behind your Chair, Mr. Speaker. That gap has been made in the

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?